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VERSAILLES

THE SITTING OF MAY 7, 1919, AT VERSAILLES: THE GERMAN DELEGATES BEFORE THE ALLIES

VERSAILLES

by

KARL FRIEDRICH NOWAK

TRANSLATED BY
NORMAN THOMAS & E. W. DICKES

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PREFACE

The material upon which this critical account of the Versailles Peace Conference and Treaty has been based falls into three categories. First and foremost the author has had the benefit of obtaining authoritative statements direct from numerous statesmen, diplomatists, and highly placed military officers, belonging to both groups of belligerents, who themselves took part, sometimes a leading part, in the proceedings of the Conference. In the second place, official documents, including many confidential minutes and memoranda, have been examined and laid under contribution. Thirdly, use has been made of other published accounts and studies bearing on the Peace Treaty, in particular *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, by Ray Stannard Baker, H. W. V. Temperley's *History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, André Tardieu's *La Paix*, and the well-known works of Francesco Nitti and Professor J. M. Keynes.

The original draft of the speech intended to be delivered by the leader of the German delegation, at the main session in the Trianon Palace Hotel, was supplied by the ex-Foreign Minister of Germany, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau.

BERLIN, *Spring* 1927. KARL FRIEDRICH NOWAK.

CHAPTER I

THE END OF THE FIGHTING

In a hundred hours in the early days of November 1918, amid the final thunder of artillery, the Great War sickened and died. On the 7th the German plenipotentiaries left the army headquarters in Spa to learn the conditions under which the enemy would agree to an armistice. In a short interview with Hindenburg just before their departure the field-marshal had said : " God be with you, gentlemen. Get the best terms you can for our fatherland." He begged them to think of the honour of the army, and to arrange, if at all possible, for hostilities to cease before the Armistice terms were actually signed. One of his staff officers added gravely : " Every day means the loss of ten thousand men ! "

The automobiles carrying the negotiators reached the battle zone by the evening, and an officer conducted them to the German front line, near La Capelle. The party consisted of Matthias Erzberger, Secretary of State and Chairman of the Armistice Commission, the Ambassador Count Oberndorff, General von Winterfeldt, and Captain von Vanselow of the Imperial Navy, with a small staff of assistants. A bugler rode in front with a white flag, and his trumpet calls rang out across the trenches. The guns were silent. The little procession moved slowly forward unhindered. On the highroad, on the enemy side of no man's land, a French officer, with a bugler, was waiting. They entered the foremost car, and the procession resumed its course. Here and there a *poilu* would shout : " *C'est la paix !* " or would jump out of his trench in amazement, still sceptical, to ask : " What are they after ? "

A halt was made in the courtyard of an old château. It was now night—clear, moonlit, silvern. The French officer, Major Count Bourbon-Buzy, asked the delegates to leave their cars. The rest of the journey was to be made in French army cars, with an officer in each. Off they went again, through devastated country, past jagged ruins, some with brightly coloured walls. Hours passed and many detours were necessary. It was past midnight when the cars stopped at last at a small house, badly damaged by shell-fire, which was evidently used as a staff office. The delegates were taken to a room where a slight meal was served. A French General then entered, and introduced himself with a stiff bow as General Debeney. He commented drily on the scantiness of the supper : " We have the same fare as our men." Conversation did not flow. The journey was resumed, and the cars now arrived at a ruined railway station, where a train with sleeping compartments awaited the party. All the blinds and curtains were tightly drawn, and the setting seemed to have something of the romance of similar situations in past history.

The train went for a while in the wrong direction, then on and onwards through the night. In the morning the journey's end was reached. The train pulled up on a siding in a clearing in the Bois de Compiègne alongside a special train containing Field-Marshal Foch's private saloon carriage. Here all ideas of romance were speedily banished by the sound of the enemy language all around.

The scene of the conference was the saloon carriage : a long bare table, a few chairs, pencils and paper. A number of junior officers were there when the plenipotentiaries entered the saloon about 9 a.m., and a moment later Marshal Foch appeared, accompanied by Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss and his naval staff officers, Marshal Foch's Chief of Staff, General Weygand, and a few other French officers. After a few brief phrases of introduction

and cool formal bows, the company took their seats, each party facing the other. The *generalissimo* turned to his interpreter and said in icy tones, but *sotto voce*, as if anxious that the proceedings should be opened with marked formality :

" Ask these gentlemen what they want."

Erzberger replied, speaking in German : " We have come to receive the Allied Powers' proposals for an armistice on land and sea and in the air." The interpreter translated, and there were murmurs when he used the word " proposals." Marshal Foch broke in :

" Tell these gentlemen that I have no proposals to make to them."

With this he half rose from his chair, and seemed on the point of bringing the proceedings to an abrupt close and abandoning the conference, when Count Oberndorff intervened. Leaning across the table he addressed the *generalissimo* in French :

" M. le Maréchal, surely this is too serious a moment to quarrel over words. How would you like us to express ourselves ? It is a matter of complete indifference to us."

Foch rejoined brusquely : " It is for you gentlemen to say what you want."

" As you are aware, M. le Maréchal," Count Oberndorff went on, " we are here as the result of a note from the President of the United States. If you will allow me I will read it."

This was a letter from the American Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, addressed to the Swiss Minister in Washington for communication to the German Government, containing the English text of Wilson's suggested basis for the conclusion of an armistice. To the evangel of his " Fourteen Points," first proclaimed on January 8, 1918, and ultimately accepted as a basis for peace by the Central Powers after a prolonged exchange of notes, the President

had since added two provisos at the request of his associates, the Allied Powers. The Swiss Minister had forwarded this document to the German Government, which had thereupon appointed and despatched the Armistice Commission. At the same time the document had been communicated by the American Secretary of State to the Allies, who had signified their agreement with the U.S.A. The letter in question ran as follows :

" In my note of October 23, 1918, I advised you that the President had transmitted his correspondence with the German authorities to the Governments with which the Government of the United States is associated as a belligerent, with the suggestion that, if those Governments were disposed to effect peace upon the terms and principles indicated, their military advisers, and the military advisers of the United States, be asked to submit to the Governments associated against Germany the necessary terms of such an armistice as would fully protect the interests of the peoples involved and ensure to the associated Governments the unrestricted power to safeguard and enforce the details of the peace to which the German Government had agreed, provided they deemed such an armistice possible from the military point of view.

" The President is now in receipt of a memorandum of observations by the Allied Governments on this correspondence, which is as follows :

" ' The Allied Governments have given careful consideration to the correspondence which has passed between the President of the United States and the German Government. Subject to the qualifications which follow, they declare their willingness to make peace with the Government of Germany on the terms of peace laid down in the President's address to Congress of

January 8, 1918, and the principles of settlement enunciated in his subsequent addresses.

" ' They must point out, however, that Clause II, relating to what is usually described as the freedom of the seas, is open to various interpretations, some of which they could not accept. They must, therefore, reserve to themselves complete freedom on this subject when they enter the Peace Conference.

" ' Further, in the conditions of peace laid down in his address to Congress of January 8, 1918, the President declared that invaded territories must be restored as well as evacuated and freed. The Allied Governments feel that no doubt ought to be allowed to exist as to what this provision implies. By it they understand that compensation will be made by Germany for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property by the aggression of Germany by land, by sea, and from the air.'

" I am instructed by the President to say that he is in agreement with the interpretation set forth in the last paragraph of the memorandum above quoted.

" I am further instructed by the President to request you to notify the German Government that Marshal Foch has been authorized by the Government of the United States and the Allied Governments to receive properly accredited representatives of the German Government and to communicate to them the terms of an Armistice."

Count Oberndorff paused. " If I understand this aright," he went on, " it means that you will communicate to us the Armistice terms."

Marshal Foch seemed satisfied, and threw out one of his characteristic exclamations : " *Bon !* " General Weygand then read out the eighteen clauses of the Armistice conditions : each one a more crushing blow for the Germans

than the one before it. A time limit of seventy-two hours was fixed within which the German negotiators were to announce their decision, which must be either acceptance or rejection. The proposal that hostilities should cease forthwith was rejected.

General von Winterfeldt and Count Oberndorff asked who would furnish them with information on any points of military or political detail that might arise, and it was decided that the plenipotentiaries should apply to General Weygand when necessary. Marshal Foch then rose, and the German delegates withdrew.

A short discussion brought them to the clear conviction that the terms laid down by the enemy would place the Empire, the army, and the whole future of the German nation in a hopeless position, and that even their powers as plenipotentiaries were not enough to authorize them to accept or reject such conditions. They accordingly resolved to refer to the Imperial Government for a decision, and despatched a member of their staff, Captain von Helldorff, with a clerk, to the German G.H.Q. in Spa. These two couriers set off at once, but had difficulty and were delayed in getting across the German lines : their mission was not understood, and for some time they were continually fired upon.

Concurrently, during the afternoon, Count Oberndorff had an interview with General Weygand, in which he tried to make clear that the negotiations could not go on if the atmosphere of the first sitting that morning were maintained. Would not General Weygand agree to their sitting down quietly and talking the matter over like sensible men ? This *démarche* had its effect, and Weygand consented to a discussion. Count Oberndorff thereupon declared roundly that the Allies did not seem really to desire an armistice. The German representatives, he said, had been prepared for harsh terms, but these demands

were sheer impossibilities. They could only drive Germany into the arms of Bolshevism, which was surely no less a menace for France herself; indeed, for the whole of Europe. General Weygand differed; he asserted that the Allies (he did not mention Foch) were entirely sincere in their desire to bring hostilities to an end, and did not regard the conditions put forward as in any way impossible of fulfilment. Count Oberndorff went on to point out that at the interview that morning, when the terms had been presented, the idea of discussing them in detail had been explicitly rejected. He now suggested, none the less, that this should not exclude, at all events, a confidential exchange of views, or at least the submission of a confidential *aide-mémoire* summarizing the plenipotentiaries' considered comments. Finally General Weygand gave way. "Well, you can indicate in writing what you regard as impossible."

Having obtained this concession, Count Oberndorff went away. After him, General von Winterfeldt called to try his hand at convincing Weygand that terms of the severity suggested, even if accepted and signed, would be found impossible to carry out. The German general remembered Brest Litovsk and the prophecy of Admiral Altvater: "You," the admiral had told the German victors, "will catch Bolshevism too." He tried to argue with his enemy colleague on these lines. "If you impose terms of such severity that they result in our collapse, the upshot will be that we shall all fall into Bolshevism."

General Weygand disagreed. "The victors have nothing to fear," he said. But he consistently showed a well-bred courtesy towards the defeated enemy, correct demeanour, and a careful choice of words to avoid giving offence, and he was very ready to afford General Winterfeldt any information on points of detail. They sat on in the carriage next to the *generalissimo's* saloon, while the British naval

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officers similarly discussed with Captain von Vanselow, with the utmost politeness, questions relating to the Fleet.

But all the conversations in the two railway trains on these sidings, surrounded on all sides by silently interested sentries, led inexorably to Germany's final and definite submission to her fate. For none of the explanations from Weygand or the British admiral actually lightened the harshness of the terms one whit. The document had been studiously examined, clause by clause, and the plenipotentiaries put in a memorandum, drafted as soon as Weygand had consented to receive it, giving chapter and verse for their allegations of the impracticability of the conditions. But the enemy's rejoinder, equally detailed and precise in its wording, granted no real alleviation, with the exception of a few minor concessions. And while the two generals were still engaged in a final confidential discussion, Marshal Foch burst in on them, betraying in his surliness and ill-temper his real feelings about what he regarded as the premature ending of the war.

" Haven't you finished yet ? " he said. " If you haven't settled the whole matter within a quarter of an hour, I'll come back again, and I warrant we'll be finished in five minutes ! "

Still there was no news of the two couriers, no sign from the army headquarters in Spa. The plenipotentiaries did not dare take upon themselves the responsibility of accepting the terms there and then. They sent wireless telegrams to Berlin via the Eiffel Tower to supplement the efforts of the couriers. But all Erzberger's requests for further instructions remained without reply.

By this time the four German representatives had quite lost touch with events in the army and at home. They only knew vaguely, from reports in French newspapers handed into their carriage, what had already happened days before : sensational stories, very likely exaggerated. Two

days after the arrival of the Armistice Commission in the Bois de Compiègne, a second consignment of technical assistants, a group of German staff officers for *matériel*, had joined them, and the news they brought certainly threw into relief the tempestuous condition of their country : A Republic proclaimed in Berlin ; Fritz Ebert, the Socialist leader, appointed Chancellor ; the German Emperor in flight to Holland. Further than this, however, even the new arrivals had no information. Possibly the upshot had been insurrection—even complete anarchy.

The delegates could do nothing but ask for further respite until they received some decision. Their position was pitiable. They begged for an extention of the time limit by twenty-four hours. Marshal Foch promptly replied :

" Not a moment beyond the seventy-two hours."

At last, late at night on November 10, the general headquarters at Spa sent a reply by wireless, in which Field-Marshal von Hindenburg set forth nine objections to the eighteen demands put forward by the French *generalissimo*. In the event of these objections being overruled, G.H.Q. recognized the futility of refusing to accept the terms, and recommended the delegates to sign at all costs. If, however, their efforts failed and no alteration could be obtained, they were to enter a vigorous and solemn protest and to appeal to President Wilson.

This telegram from the Commander-in-Chief was closely followed by a despatch from the Chancellor. They were to do their utmost to secure the privilege of honourable capitulation for the German troops in East Africa, and were also to point out the urgent danger of famine in Germany if the blockade were not raised.

The plenipoteniaries now made up their minds to sign. The two sides met once more in Marshal Foch's saloon carriage, and debated from 2 a.m. to 5 a.m. At this second and last interview the discussion ranged round more than

details. At the very last moment, before the terms were signed, Erzberger succeeded in getting the number of motor-lorries to be handed over to the enemy reduced from 10,000 to 5,000, the number of machine-guns from 30,000 to 25,000, the aeroplanes from 2,000 to 1,700. He was able, too, to reduce the neutral zone on the right bank of the Rhine from 14 kilometres, as originally stipulated, to 10 kilometres, and to secure for the troops in German East Africa permission to evacuate the territory within a specified time instead of unconditional surrender. The British admiral and his staff had estimated the number of submarines in the German navy at 300, and were dumb-founded to get the reply : " Gentlemen, we have never possessed as many as that." They accordingly contented themselves with one-third of their original demand, but even this reduced figure covered nearly the full strength of the U-boats.

These concessions exhausted the victors' stock of leniency, and the plenipotentiaries then signed. Belgium, France, and Alsace-Lorraine were to be evacuated within a fortnight ; " any troops remaining on the expiry of this time limit to be interned as prisoners of war " ; 5,000 pieces of ordnance, 25,000 machine-guns, 30,000 bomb-throwers, 1,700 aeroplanes, 5,000 locomotives, 1,000 trucks, 5,000 lorries, 100 submarines, 8 cruisers, 6 dreadnoughts were to be handed over to the enemy, and " all other warships to have their armaments removed and to be placed under the control of the Allies in neutral or allied ports " ; the left bank of the Rhine was to be evacuated, and " Mayence, Coblenz, and Cologne occupied by the enemy within a zone to the depth of ten kilometres." Finally the blockade of the vanquished countries was to be maintained. The undertaking given by the victors to mitigate its effects by sending in certain consignments of foodstuffs was more of the nature of a benevolent expectation than a binding pledge. In effect, Germany

laid down all her weapons, her every means of defence, submitted to a complete and unqualified capitulation.

Never had bankrupt statesmanship, bankrupt generalship, been displayed more obviously or more devastatingly. Erzberger did, it is true, raise his voice in emotional rhetoric to deliver the " solemn protest " recommended by the Commander-in-Chief. " A nation of seventy million souls," he cried, " may suffer, but can never die." To which Marshal Foch merely returned one of his dry ejaculations : " Quite so ! "

Six hours after the terms had been signed the " cease fire " was sounded. From that moment Germany lay defenceless, at the mercy of an unknown future. And in all the capitals of her enemies the bonfires of jubilation flamed up.

Nowhere did the flames glow more brightly than against the night sky of New York. The city gave itself up to a mad orgy of exultation. Salvos of rockets rained down over Brooklyn Bridge, leaped from shore to shore, and were swallowed up in the mass pyrotechnic displays let off from Coney Island. The sky-scrapers were a blaze of light ; cascades of golden rain poured from their topmost turrets. The shop fronts glittered with garish-coloured lamps, garlands of fire announcing " victory at last." Along Broadway went a surging sea of exuberant humanity, wild, mad with joy, completely intoxicated with triumph. America had won the war. America had decided its issue. America was going to set the world straight. An elderly gentleman in an overcoat and soft felt hat gazed musingly at the fireworks and the flying bunting. He had been in exile from his far-off mother country for years, and now he seemed to be within sight of his goal. He himself would never have agreed to an armistice. His plan would have been to ride in triumph through the German capital at the head of his victorious divisions. But never mind ; the new State

for which he had been struggling was in being. Slowly Thomas G. Masaryk made his way through the rapturous crowds. It was to their Chief Executive that he must look for all the measures necessary to safeguard that State of his : to Woodrow Wilson.

And not only the Czechs looked to Woodrow Wilson. The chief cities of the world—Rome, Paris, London—all the nations, victors and vanquished alike, were eagerly awaiting the moment when the President of the United States would utter the word of power and promulgate his Peace. As soon as the first intoxication of triumph had evaporated, the leading men of the nations had experienced a kind of inhibition, and, amid the popular jubilation over the armistice they had decreed, stood puzzled and irresolute before the great event. In London the new situation positively scared the Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, for all that it put an end to his anxiety over the war-weariness of the Allies.

He had always distrusted the soldiers' optimism. Right up to the beginning of November, Marshal Foch had set his face against any attempt to bring the war to an end, and had assured Lloyd George, Clemenceau, Orlando, and Benes—who joined them from Geneva—that it could only last a few weeks longer. The marshal had been anxious to inflict a complete and spectacular defeat upon the German army. The final battle might, in his view, cost perhaps 30,000 more men. Thus the Armistice had forced itself on the *generalissimo* ; he had been reluctant to see it come, and disappointed at the weakening of the German resistance which had robbed him of his hopes. Lloyd George, on the other hand, had in his own mind been prepared for a further full year of resistance. He was now relieved of anxiety as to the unwillingness of the Allied peoples to put up with the misery of war-time conditions any longer. He did not regard the complete disarming of

the defeated enemy with the same soldierly regret as Field-Marshal Haig, who, somewhat aggrieved at the apparent lack of appreciation of the part played by the British troops, took every opportunity of singing the praises of the Germans' bravery. But the British Prime Minister, casting an uneasy glance at his French ally, saw possibilities of complicated future developments. Only his ingrained opportunism carried him through the bewilderment caused by the abrupt termination of the war. For his purposes he needed complete victory, but above all that the war should be over and done with. This led him to agree to severity towards the defeated enemy. The Germans should be told to lay down their arms. But in the first place he did not believe that they would ; and, in the second, he hardly even knew which alternative would be preferable, the immediate political effect at home of a crushing victory, and the relaxed tension in the war-weary army, or easier relations in future with the vanquished. Now, however, that the enemy had actually allowed himself to be disarmed, the future could safely be left to solve its own problems.

Wilson, anyhow, was due in Europe. He had proclaimed the gospel of the New World Order. Let him come over. Lloyd George would wait for him. All the leading statesmen were awaiting him. The whole world was waiting expectantly for Woodrow Wilson.

CHAPTER II

THE WORLD-STRAIGHTENER

On the fore-deck of the *George Washington*, which was conveying him from New York to Brest, Professor Wilson was to be seen standing, a tall, thin figure silently gazing in the direction of the Continent which he had, so to speak, vanquished by the armed force of his United State. He despised Europe's blood-stained past, with its ancient legacies of tribal wars, and was determined to impose upon it for all time a new testament of pure humanity. He was a Professor of American History, thoroughly acquainted with the glorious paths which his country had trodden from the first establishment of the free " Union " right down to his own time of office ; a connoisseur and expounder of all the nation's political wisdom from the great Virginia Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence downwards, and the greatest international jurist and interpeter of constitutions in Princeton University, and perhaps the world. The American people had summoned him from his professor's chair to the White House, as head of the State, because no other public man had declaimed so sincerely, so passionately, and so relentlessly against political venality and crookedness, party jobbery and graft—in the professor's view, the greatest afflictions that could befall his country ; in fact, any country. As President he had then led the great American people into the European shambles. Why ? Not only because he regarded the German submarines as a flouting of the freedom of the seas and a menace to the ships flying the Stars and Stripes ; possibly not even because of the indignant clamour of the

American heavy industries, their complaint of interference with their supplies to the belligerents, their demand for Free Trade in munitions and for the President's protection of their rights and privileges. The fact was that a world catastrophe had occurred in Europe through what this professor termed an unprecedented act of criminality, through an unprecedented exercise of brute force which was a resounding challenge to all the laws of humanitarianism enshrined in that repository of pure political ethic, the American Constitution and national history. Not that the New World, with its ocean ramparts, was in any danger of being overrun with fire and sword, though even there trade, general well-being, and business convenience had suffered a little. But much more serious even than to have one's business interfered with was to stand idly by and see the doctrine of " Might is Right " proclaimed once more among the nations of the world—an affront to morality, to human and divine justice, to the dignity of mankind, to Christianity. The professor had witnessed the attack on innocent little Belgium, and, when the German Emperor had attempted to explain the incident away, had replied, with stern independence, with a reference to the Day of Judgment, when sin and guilt shall become visible to all and men shall be weighed in the balance. Later on, he had read daily, in his study, reports of the bestial outrages of the soldiery, and now came the alarming piracy of the U-boats. A smell as of burning villages reached America's nostrils. The President resolved to take part in the work of crushing the monsters who were befouling God's earth in the bad old European way. He entered the war, determined to have a voice in the settlement on the Day of Judgment. He would speak up for the ideals of international justice, the ideals which he had studied and on which he had lectured at Princeton ; for the ideals of justice, not of his own country alone, but of the whole of the menaced world.

He wanted nothing for himself from the war ; nothing for America. On the contrary, America was rich and could give. One aim, and one only, should be paramount : the utter and final destruction of the principle which had tortured humanity for thousands of years, the principle that might is right. It should be replaced once for all by a New Moral Order. It was in the name of this order that he had sent American guns to thunder on the battlefields of Europe. He had been fully aware that only American troops, coming fresh to a struggle between adversaries exhausted with three years of warfare, could determine and complete the victory. Now, a few weeks after the roar of the guns had been stilled in Europe, the professor was on his way to Paris to set up his World Order.

The main outlines had been laid down some time back in his gospel message of the " Fourteen Points," supplemented, a few months before the Armistice, by an extra " Four Points." In these he had endeavoured to keep his mind unclouded by prejudice and by arbitrary distinctions between friend and foe. He had set out to offer the expectant peoples in every camp and in every clime the greatest good that can fall to the lot of any nation on this earth : lasting, guaranteed peace, and self-determination as regards nationality and form of government. The professor had turned a blind eye to everything except these two fundamental factors in the free development of national life. Round these factors, as fixed stars, his Fourteen and his Four Points had all revolved. They spoke of Freedom of the Seas, Free Trade among the nations, Open Covenants in international politics, since the destiny of peoples depended on these commitments ; they demanded such special international acts as the liberation of the oppressed nationalities in the dual monarchy, the limitation of Turkish arbitrary sovereignty over non-Turkish races, the immediate liberation and reconstruction of territories

which had been invaded and occupied by force ; but all these demands arose directly from the inalienable right of self-determination and the no less indispensable requirement of justice in international relations. Once these claims were admitted by all the nations of the world, or, at any rate, by a majority of them—for, if only a minority showed themselves contumacious in face of the new ethic, means could easily be found of constraining them to follow the paths of morality and well-doing—the great, the sacred dream of humanity would be realized, the temple of the League of Nations, for the sake of which he had brought the Giant America into the war, would take shape out of the void, and the rejuvenated earth would at last be peopled by a new, free, noble race of purified humanity, who would prohibit war for ever and ensure justice and security of person, livelihood, self-development, and property to all, even to the poor and weak who possessed no armaments.

What rejoicing, what a cry from the heart of the tortured world, had reached the President's ears when this extraordinary message from the White House, of constructive peace as a war aim, burst upon the Old World ! Not that everything in the President's pronouncement was novel. In their worst period of uncertainty as to the chances of victory, in 1917, the Allies, as a sequel of the repeated crises of the war, had been visited with a sharp attack of moral fervour, and had broadcast among their peoples statements in which there was no talk of annexations but much of justice and the rights of small nations. The International Socialist Congress at Stockholm at the beginning of 1918 had also made an attempt to proclaim the right of self-determination of peoples. But never before had there been such a stirring summons, such a definite proposal, so concrete a draft programme, such a message of joy to the whole wide, agued world ; none had been so

compelling, so whole-hearted, so overpowering in its effect—coming, as it did, from the most powerful ruler on the face of the globe—so utterly convincing in its sincerity, as this new doctrine of salvation, the evangel of Professor Wilson. All the belligerents were only too glad to put an end to the killing and burning if that gospel could be made a reality. The President of the United States knew that hostilities could only end, sooner or later, in the collapse of the Central Powers, and that he would then, in conjunction with his Associates, be able to enforce his New World Order by mere decree. When he discovered, however, that even the enemy welcomed the new gospel with jubilation, and was ready at any stage of the struggle to accept the professor's ideal specification for peace terms, he felt it was quite unnecessary to continue the slaughter any longer. That, in itself, was surely an extraordinary victory for the World Apostle—that warlike Huns should be willing to lay down their swords if only the new basic principles which he had proclaimed were guaranteed to operate in the settlement. The President of the United States of America, who for years had been gradually moulding and perfecting his view of life and its due form and expression, the strong, mighty ally who was fully conscious of the entire agreement and concurrence of his Associates with his aims and principles, was of course willing and able to undertake such a guarantee, to ensure that Germany's surrender would not be misused, to see that the guarantee was supported by America's powerful shoulders. Professor Wilson had accordingly brought about an armistice, and, with that, pledged his word for the re-shaping of the world. When the hour of settlement came, he would redeem that pledge as supreme Moral Dictator, as the Peoples' Messiah, in the service of a transfigured humanity. Meanwhile, the *George Washington* steamed on and on.

With the President travelled a multitude of cases, boxes,

and trunks containing his working apparatus, a whole library of volumes in which his experts had for some time past been working out his ideas and reflections on every conceivable topic connected with the peace settlement. But, important as all this accumulated knowledge, stowed away in the hold of the *George Washington*, might be, unmanageable as the host of telegraphic appeals, the requests from various nationalities for special consideration, the despairing cries for help sent from starving towns since the Armistice and during the voyage to Europe, threatened to become, nothing was to be allowed to have any real influence on the President's fixed purpose or deflect the steady course which he had long since mapped out for himself. His every thought revolved round his two chosen themes—self-determination for all humanity and the dream of a League of all Nations.

To be quite accurate, although his message had plunged the world into transports of joy, none of the ideas it contained was really his own original contribution. Guided by his strong and instinctive faith in the mission he had enthusiastically taken up, he had borrowed idea after idea, phrase after phrase, sentence after sentence, from other men, from foreign writers and philosophers or from familiar, well-studied historical models. The first suggestion had perhaps come from Walter H. Page, the American Ambassador in London when the war broke out and a friend of Wilson's youth, who in his regular correspondence with the President often pointed out that America was peculiarly and uniquely fitted to dictate to the whole world a peace consonant with the highest human dignity. Later on, the phrases Self-Determination and League of Nations had cropped up. These took a firmer and firmer hold on the Puritan scholar, who was struck by their intellectual content and widespread potential reaction. In his study in Washington he had devoted almost his whole attention to

these ideas from the moment he had declared war on Germany. He freely admitted that his was a "single-track mind." He was surrounded by draft-proposals from all quarters on the future of international organization —resolutions from the American League to Enforce Peace ; statements from the British League of Nations Union ; above all, a report on the idea of an international league by a committee of experts, under the chairmanship of Baron Phillimore, appointed by Mr. Balfour, the British Foreign Minister, at the beginning of 1918. There had been no keener scrutineer, no more diligent student of all these suggestions and drafts, than President Wilson ; no one had measured them so carefully against the ethical standards which the American people had inherited from its past history. When the professor finally completed his own draft constitution for a League of Nations, it was essentially a synthesis of what had most appealed to him in the various sources he had consulted. He was as ready to appropriate the substance of an alien argument, provided it fitted in with his moral purpose, as to adopt word for word an apt phrase which defined and delimited his meaning " beyond a peradventure."

Thus it cannot be said that his two great postulates for the peace about to be concluded were his own inspired creation. He had built them up after collecting stones and mortar from all quarters and comparing many architects' plans. As for personal consultations regarding the messages and definitions which he had promulgated to the world for its salvation, it is probable that his only adviser was Colonel House, who certainly contributed a number of useful ideas and phrases. The President was always averse from verbal discussion of the matters which were engaging his private thoughts. Perhaps he disliked the haste and transience of the spoken word ; at all events, he made it his practice to rely on written communications wherever possible. The

drafts and suggestions which reached him by almost every post were piled up around his table-lamp, beside the Virginia Bill and the Declaration of Independence, while his own works, such as his *History of the United States* or his *The State*, were there for constant reference, to refresh his memory when he wanted to quote the more important axioms in political science. If he needed to be reminded how a statesman fosters the growth and greatness of his people, there was his *Life of George Washington* to re-read, a critical biography written with a brilliance and acumen unsurpassed by any other professor in the country. Conversation worried the President more than it helped or refreshed him. It was liable to divert the current of his thoughts, which, after all, were more important to him than anything else, "single-track" as he might admit they were. He was, moreover, subject a good deal to strange inhibitions, being often unable to explain with sufficient clarity what he meant, or even to explain at all. He therefore preferred to commit everything to writing, collating, comparing, embodying, making marginal notes, re-writing, gradually compiling a new text and subjecting this to the same process over again. He was, in fact, the very model of a compiler, thorough, industrious, and open-minded. But his somewhat viscous mental processes could only function in perfect quiet behind closed doors, from which his messages, representing the residuum of effective systematized knowledge, would issue in due course and with due emphasis to the outside world. When he was at Princeton he would sit for hours in his study preparing a lecture, and then address the students ; in Washington he sat for hours in the President's room and then addressed the attentive world. There was little difference in the attitude of mind, and none at all in the method of procedure. At Princeton he had always communicated his comments and views to his students in writing ; in Washington he sent out his

directions and orders and called for reports and explanations from Ministers and Ambassadors always in writing. He never attached any importance to seeing and speaking to his Secretary of State on any matter of State business. The Secretary of State would often complain that " the President will never accept advice," but the President went on unconcernedly dealing with every matter personally and in his own way. He worked with the same intensity and thoroughness whatever the subject in hand. His consistent thoroughness, and the many successive drafts which he produced on every conceivable topic, certainly had the effect of ensuring that the final wording conveyed its meaning without ambiguity to all and sundry ; witness his " Fourteen Points," which had been quite clearly understood by the whole world. And the voluminous material he was now taking with him to Europe on the two axioms above referred to—his programme for national Self-Determination and the League of Nations—must assuredly produce the same perfect clarity.

As he gazed eastwards from the deck of the *George Washington*, silently casting his eyes over the infinite expanse of the ocean, he was stirred, not perhaps by any anxiety as to his coming moral victory, but possibly by eagerness to see the scene of his culminating effort appear on the horizon. He made an attempt to enjoy a few days' rest before the struggle began. No one knew what he was really thinking and feeling, for his only reference to the immediate future was a few occasional words exchanged with some member of the American delegation which accompanied him. His mode of living was modest and quiet, as it always was. Sometimes he would invite a guest to his table and unbend to the point of jocosity. Before each meal he would say grace ; in fact, it was well known that the whole of his daily routine bore much resemblance to the simple piety of a pastor's life. Three days before his arrival in Europe he

was suddenly and quite spontaneously—for his actions and expressions of opinion never seemed to need any external stimulus—seized with the desire—perhaps a form of uneasiness—to say a final word to his companions in the struggle. He sent for his staff and the experts on whom he was relying for help in building up the edifice of peace, and addressed them in his cabin. " Keep me informed as to what is right and I will fight for it. But see that I have a solid basis of accurate information."

It almost seemed as if the President was suddenly hovering between self-confidence and a kind of uneasy premonition. He made a striking confession one evening to George Creel, one of his entourage : " The picture that keeps coming before me—I hope with all my heart that it is a mistaken foreboding—is of a tragedy of disappointments."

The *George Washington* reached Brest on December 13, 1918. No doubt the President was fully aware of the possible sources of disappointment. But he little knew why it was that the outcome threatened to be " a tragedy."

CHAPTER III

THE MACHINERY OF THE CONFERENCE

There ensued a period of brilliant festivities. The programme of the President's first weeks in Europe was a triumphant progress through three countries, with a shower of bouquets, honours, and presents wherever he went. In France and Italy, in London and Manchester, he saw with his own eyes evidences of the overflowing, rapturous enthusiasm which he had aroused in the Old World. In the Forum Romanum a breath from the past of a world dominion based on force and slavery greeted this would-be creator of new and better forms of power among mankind. The King and Queen of England did him honour, and graciously insisted on his sharing their State coach. The lonely brooder of Washington was exhausted by his efforts to show his appreciation in responding to the myriad acclamations. He could not help noticing that the crowds which lined his route paid little attention to the King and Queen, even to Marshal Foch or to Clemenceau, and his sense of an apostolic mission grew and grew. Not yet was his missionary prestige clouded by controversy. At first he was at pains to sustain a conventional attitude of polite unconcern at all the receptions and festivities arranged in his honour, but little by little the austere, joyless demeanour he had inherited from his Scottish ancestors was invaded by a new geniality, the effect of the insidious allurement of the Parisian air, and his Puritan stiffness tended to relax.

He was accommodated in a small house in the Place des États Unis, snugly hidden away in the midst of a quiet garden. It was provided with a study, in which he could sit

by a flickering fire, surrounded by old pictures and valuable books, and think out his decisions undisturbed. His health was never of the best, and, although he was buoyed up for the time by his soaring aspirations, close concentration on important work soon exhausted his strength. He had a rest room next to the study, opening out of it by a secret door disguised by dummy books painted on the wall ; a touch on a hidden knob, and he could disappear. On the gravel path outside the house American sentries marched up and down. He had brought with him a considerable detachment of troops, for even on hospitable French soil he thought it desirable to surround himself with outward and visible signs of American power and prerogative. He had a private untappable telephone line to the Hôtel Crillon, in the Place du Carrousel close by, where his staff, under Colonel House, was accommodated, and, as a matter of course, complete freedom from any sort of control was insisted on for the telegrams of his Press Bureau.

The first four weeks after the President's arrival were fully occupied with travelling, official festivities, and preliminary organizing arrangements. Meanwhile the British delegates to the Peace Conference had packed their trunks and boxes just before Christmas, though no one in London knew when the delegation would be required to leave. An interchange of telegrams had gone on between London and Paris, but after all these weeks the luggage still lay waiting, and with it the British collection of data and drafts for use in the work of peace. Just as on the American side a Committee of Enquiry under Colonel House had been set up by the President's orders, two whole years before the war came to an end, so in England the Foreign Office, under instructions from the War Cabinet, had assembled in London a body of historians, jurists, and economists to study and elucidate the chief relevant problems in all their bearings and ramifications. The

British experts likewise had nearly two years' activity behind them, and since the Armistice their zeal for work had accelerated the *tempo* of their operations tenfold. Not that any of them could produce a cut-and-dried programme for the detailed provisions of the coming Peace Treaty, like André Tardieu, one of the French experts, who was apparently entirely satisfied that he was in possession of the one and only correct solution for all the problems of the world now that the enemy had been overthrown. But as for the slim white booklets of the English experts dealing with Belgian neutrality, with the Rhine problem, with the Danube, with the possible future of little Luxemburg, and heaven knows what besides, the name of these books of reference was legion. Of all the rival guides to the maze of the troubled earth which awaited reshaping, the English collection was the amplest, and was generally felt to be more systematically and concisely arranged than either the American or the French. Even members of the American and French delegations frequently consulted the little white books in their search for enlightenment on obscure subjects on which they were called upon to pronounce or prophesy.

The signal to leave London came at last from the Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, when it was least expected. He placed himself at the head of the delegation, and he too took a swarm of soldiers with him. The British plenipotentiaries arrived in Paris on January 10. They found numerous other delegations already there : in all twenty-seven mouthpieces of a world, hitherto at war, now in parley with the Central Powers. Their host was the French Government, from whom the invitations had proceeded, and the President of the Republic, Raymond Poincaré, welcomed the imposing throng with due solemnity in the Great Hall of Napoleon III at the Quai d'Orsay. This was the prelude of pomp and circumstance. The first regular

business session of the Peace Conference opened immediately afterwards, on January 12, 1919, at the Quai d'Orsay.

No previous Peace Congress had ever been staged on so vast a scale in every sense, either as regards its agenda or its accommodation. The scope of the Congress of Vienna was as nothing in comparison with the requirements of the immense gathering which was now taking up its task in Paris. On the morning of the first day of the Conference, Pichon, the French Foreign Minister, who was acting as chairman, at once made an attempt to facilitate the despatch of business by suggesting to the meeting that " it was first of all necessary to consider the *modus operandi* of the Conference." He naturally used the French language for his remarks, but it was questionable whether all, or even the majority, of the delegates understood what he was saying. The President of the United States knew no French and spoke English only. The British delegates and the representatives of Canada were in a similar position, while nearly all the French delegation and the Italian Prime Minister, Orlando, spoke no English. The question at once arose, in which of the two languages the proceedings of the Conference should be carried on, for it was obviously essential to agree upon a definite and authoritative text for its minutes and for the draft of the Treaty, in order to provide an authoritative recourse in case of disputes or varying interpretations at a later date. The French Prime Minister, Clemenceau, considered that, as statesmen and diplomatists had hitherto always used the French language as the medium for their most important documents and instruments, there was no apparent reason, particularly in view of " all that France had suffered," why there should be any divergence from this practice. At the same time, the English-speaking members of the Conference represented between them nearly half the population of the globe, and,

as Mr. Lloyd George pointed out, now that the United States had taken its place for the first time on the diplomatic battlefield, " that country, with the British Empire, constituted a majority of the Allied and Associated Powers, with English as their official language." The British Prime Minister accordingly proposed that both French and English should be used at the Conference, a propitiatory suggestion for a compromise which was at once followed up by the Italian Foreign Minister, Baron Sonnino—a peevish and at times somewhat domineering individual—with the further amendment that the languages of this Conference should be French, English, and Italian. If the meeting were to be asked to take into consideration " all that France had suffered," then " they must not forget that Italy had taken her full share of the fighting and had put between four and five million men into the field." Baron Sonnino added something about a " downright insult." In his annoyance over this dispute, Clemenceau declared that " if so much importance was going to be attached to such petty details, it was certainly a bad outlook for the League of Nations." This was, however, by no means the last of the struggles over petty details.

It was finally decided that the official languages " should be French and English." Baron Sonnino said no more ; as a matter of fact, he spoke both these languages equally excellently. The President of the United States had also spoken in favour of adopting English side by side with French. If exotic delegates whose countries also had bills to present to the Central Powers desired to address the Conference—the Emir Feisul of Arabia, for instance—interpreters would have to be employed in any case, and would speak in English or French only. That settled the language question. The next problem for discussion was the composition of the actual Peace Conference : how many delegates of which nations should be allowed to take part in the debates.

Twenty-seven different countries had sent representatives to Paris, and twenty-seven countries, large and small, wanted to join in all the deliberations of the Conference, to have a voice, a joint share in the negotiations, to share responsibility for the decisions. Such a gigantic organism was, however, variously condemned as superfluous or unjustified. After all, the determination of new frontiers for Germany seemed hardly to concern Ecuador, or the Emir Feisul, or the Free State of Liberia. Moreover, there was general agreement that a deliberative body comprising the whole of the delegates would be a practical impossibility. On the other hand, the British Dominions were also taking part in the Conference, and they practically amounted to additional and independent States. "We are just as important as Portugal," declared the Canadian delegates, and the British Commission was considering sending to each meeting of the main Conference a team comprising five representatives of the mother country and two or three to speak for the colonies. At this stage somebody recalled the precedent of the Vienna Congress : Committees with a membership of four or eight could be set up to investigate and come to a decision on each separate problem, while their proceedings should be co-ordinated by a General Purposes Committee of five. Each of the more important committees should contain one or two representatives of each of the Great Powers, and those which dealt with subjects with which the smaller Powers were concerned—for instance, the Reparations question, in which Belgium and Serbia had claims to argue just as much as any other Power—should include representatives of the small nations affected. But this suggestion fared no better than the first proposal. Clemenceau in particular was not in favour of taking into consultation too often or too seriously any countries outside the Great Powers. His idea was to work out the main lines of the peace terms *en petit comité*, prior to their discussion at

plenary sittings, and the Great Powers, in his view, were admirably fitted to form this exclusive, authoritative *petit comité*. " I had always imagined," he said, " that it was generally agreed that the five Great Powers should develop their point of view before going into the Conference room. In the event of another war Germany would throw her whole strength, not against Cuba or Honduras, but against France ; France would always bear the brunt. I feel strongly that we should adhere to this line of action, which in brief amounts to this, that meetings shall be held at which the Great Powers will reach agreement on all important points, while the preliminary investigation of secondary problems shall be referred to the committees or commissions."

The President of the United States did not altogether see eye to eye with M. Clemenceau on this point. He had no particular objection to " informal exchanges of views " between the leaders of the Great Powers, a procedure which seemed to appeal also to the British Prime Minister, but he held that, apart from such informal discussions, a definite clear-cut organization should be set up embracing the whole of the nations represented at the Peace Conference. It was important not to give the smaller States any excuse for complaining or sulking.

The principal object was secured and a working arrangement achieved by the five Great Powers associating to form a special Supreme Council, which reserved to itself the most important decisions. A " Council of Ten " was set up, consisting of the Heads of States or Prime Ministers and their Foreign Ministers : for America President Wilson and Secretary Lansing, for Great Britain Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. A. J. Balfour, for France MM. Clemenceau and Pichon, for Italy Signor Orlando and Baron Sonnino, and for Japan Baron Makino and Viscount Chinda. These constituted the " Ten." All the nations represented at the

Conference were, however, given full rights of membership and attendance at plenary sittings, while for special problems and individual questions the idea of *ad hoc* bodies, commissions of enquiry, main and sub-committees was retained. These were to be appointed as the need arose, except where material was already waiting to be dealt with, and were to deliberate and make their reports with express speed. All such reports were to be submitted to the "Council of Ten," which would then decide what should be placed on the agenda for plenary sittings.

Now that the questions of language and machinery had been settled, there was no real reason why at this very first session the Conference should not get right down to work without further delay. But Marshal Foch had a few words to say first. This august assembly was laying the foundations of the peace of the world : well and good, but the *generalissimo* did not regard the war as yet at an end. Germany was overthrown, but the fires of insurrection were flaming all over the Continent. From the East a grave menace threatened all civilized humanity. Russian Bolshevism would sweep across a Germany left trembling with exhaustion, incapable of resistance or even of self-defence against dissolution, and would soon be at the gates of France. The French Chief of Staff, in discussion with General von Winterfeldt in the Bois de Compiègne, had met the latter's misgivings as to the spread of Bolshevist infection with the nonchalant reply that " The victors have nothing to fear." But the *generalissimo's* views on the matter were very different from those of his Chief-of-Staff. Foch considered that his troops would still find plenty to do in the way of marching and fighting. He had drafted a detailed memorandum on a vast new plan of campaign, in which the Allied armies were to press through Germany to Moscow and beyond. He was not deterred by the memory of the fate of the Napoleonic eagles in the snowy steppes of

Russia. Times had changed ; methods had improved. The American troops were the freshest, and should therefore form the bulk of the new expeditionary force. Their first objective would be Poland, whence it would be an easy matter to liquidate the Russian peril.

Some of his hearers were not exactly edified by the *generalissimo's* plan. The President of the United States was fully alive to the dangerous menace presented by the reverberations of that alien world-doctrine which, broadcast from Moscow, was not only dominating Russia, but beginning to arouse and foment serious unrest, mischief, and disaffection all over the world. But his view was that political and social problems could not be solved by tanks and shells. Moreover, he had not taken the trouble to attend a Peace Conference for the purpose of ordering the guns to resume firing. It was time that the bellicose methods to which the military gentlemen were used were discontinued. Far from letting the American troops advance any farther, he was for sending them home.

The President was not alone in opposing the plan of a further advance ; the new fanfares filled Mr. Lloyd George with consternation. The first and foremost object of the Prime Minister's solicitude was to secure the earliest practicable return of his troops from the Continent. While Marshal Foch was elaborating new war plans, unrest was growing among the war-weary soldiers at home. The British Commander-in-Chief, Field-Marshal Haig, had, in fact, just arrived in Paris, not only to discuss questions of demobilization, but to urge that it should proceed without delay. Haig expressed no opinion in public at the Conference as to the military soundness of the new campaign. He had long since come to his own conclusions regarding Marshal Foch's principle of strategy : " Let the English attack, and when they have won the victory, we will express our appreciation." But all disputes over the

credit for past exploits left Haig cold. What he was not going to agree to in any event was the use of British troops for any further adventures. On the contrary, he had come to press for the earliest possible termination of the state of war. This was obviously, too, the only possible line for the British Premier to take, quite apart from the fact that one of Mr. Lloyd George's pet aversions was the remote, alien, and unprepossessing Polish nation which Marshal Foch was now showing such unexpected anxiety to salvage. Lloyd George joined with Wilson in opposing the venture.

But not even the French Prime Minister came to the rescue of his great, victorious general. In almost every issue Clemenceau's aims were those of Foch. The politician and the soldier were alike convinced that France must necessarily have different aims and different needs from those of Britain and America, or any other nation represented at the Conference. They both felt instinctively that there could for France be hardly any demands or problems of importance after this war compared with the one main preoccupation—how to obtain security against recurrence of the experiences of 1914. Even the restoration of the lost provinces, indemnities for war losses, the whole Reparations question, were none of them so vital as the question of the future protection of France against German revenge. The marshal and the statesman both agreed that it would be unsafe to send the *poilus* home for a long time yet. The presence of the French army was the guarantee that Germany would carry out any conditions of peace that the victors might be willing to offer. Further, both were pretty well agreed that the left bank of the Rhine must be occupied as a pledge for the fulfilment of the peace terms. The only difference between them on that point was that Clemenceau envisaged the ultimate creation of a German buffer-state outside the French frontier, while Foch, like President Poincaré (who was more in sympathy with the

general than the Prime Minister was), wanted the period of occupation to be followed by the development of a Rhineland State entirely dependent upon France. A new Rhine province completely under France's thumb, the postponement of demobilization, and a new anti-Russian campaign : these were the three planks in the programme of the French military party, whose leader and mouthpiece—but not an especially vehement one—was Marshal Foch.

Foch was, on the whole, quite satisfied with what he had accomplished. As he said, " For some time ahead we have nothing to fear from Germany." And the demands which he, as a military expert, proposed should be made upon Germany, as the economic and political spoils of victory, seemed to him to be eminently fair and reasonable. Nothing more drastic was necessary for " security," and he was quite willing to be moderate. There was, however, a military clique in the Ministry of War, of which General Albi and General Buat were the leading spirits, whose aspirations went considerably beyond those attributed to Marshal Foch. In the Chamber of Deputies, too, M. Lefèvre, the leader of the die-hards, was a vociferous partisan of more extreme measures, while M. Mordaque, the War Minister's Chef de Cabinet, was straining every nerve to induce Clemenceau (who combined the offices of Premier and Minister of War) to stiffen the military demands beyond what the *generalissimo* had suggested. The fact was that Foch himself was no longer so deeply concerned with the beaten enemy. He was naturally determined that the politicians should not disregard his views, and that their world-reconstruction policy should be the expression of the great victory he had so hardly won ; but the soldier in him outweighed his interest in politics. He was the soldier *pur sang*—eager for war. He had created by force of arms the situation which gave the statesmen the

chance to re-arrange the world; he was still in control of his armed forces, and was anxious to go on employing them. The triumphal entry into Berlin was overdue, and a bloodless, belated entry was of no use to a field-marshal. He therefore proposed to carry hostilities into Russia.

But the Prime Minister opposed him in no measured terms. It was not only that Clemenceau desired, was in fact bound, to humour his Allies; not only that, like them, he felt that after four years of war military exploits in Muscovy could well be dispensed with; but there was hardly one interview between the Premier and Foch which, according to intimate eye-witnesses, did not end in violent language or a quarrel of some sort, in spite of the fact that their conceptions of the kind of peace to be concluded were almost identical. The *generalissimo* was short-tempered, abrupt in his manners if he felt he was being obstructed, peremptory if his wishes were not met by immediate soldierly compliance without question or argument. It was frequently said of him that his character in this respect was almost un-French. The Prime Minister, for his part, would fly out unceremoniously at anyone who crossed his path at the wrong time, or ventured to differ from him. Georges Clemenceau was brutally frank. He took no pains to avoid "scenes," but rather invited them, and was not deterred by the embarrassment of casual onlookers. He would say his whole mind, then stop abruptly and go. In France he was a demi-god on the same level as Marshal Foch. Their temperaments clashed, and sparks would almost always fly when they met. On Clemenceau's side, however, the tendency to quarrel was not only due to his sharing the other's passionate, testy disposition, with all their agreement on policy; it was because of his innate and supercilious contempt for the whole race of generals. "Even when I was only a journalist," he used to say, "I had to keep my hand in my pockets, or

they would have kissed them." So the first thing the French Premier and Minister of War did was to eject the generals from the meetings of the Conference. He would have nothing to do with Foch's scheme for an Eastern campaign. He would have nothing to do with generals at all : five leading statesmen were surely sufficient to evolve a draft peace treaty. Without this definite lead, the quiet, rather old-fashioned M. Pichon would never have dared to move such a resolution at the Conference ; but he was always ready to fall in with any suggestion made by his chief, with whose violent temper he was as familiar as most. He proposed " That the meetings should in future be held without the military advisers being present, and that they should now withdraw."

The *generalissimo's* plan of campaign was shelved ; the generals themselves were no longer there ; the smaller nations, too, were outside the council chamber, and could no linger disturb the French Prime Minister. The air was cleared, and the pure atmosphere of civilian statesmanship filled the hall. At the next meeting, held on the following morning, the President of the United States handed in the " list of subjects " which he had drawn up as a basis for the work of the Conference. They were, in order of importance :

The League of Nations ;
Reparations ;
New States ;
Frontiers ;
Colonies.

The Conference adopted the list and the order of priority. The real work could now begin. The President of the United States opened without further delay his case for the League of Nations.

CHAPTER IV

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The first more or less official attempt to sketch the broad outlines of a League of Nations had been made, as has already been mentioned, by Lord Phillimore, in the spring of 1918. President Wilson had worked on this draft, but had introduced many amendments and elaborated many details. The two fundamental clauses in the Phillimore plan, which comprised eighteen in all, were, firstly, the demand for some kind of unspecified Arbitration Court which would investigate and adjust disputes between members of the projected League, and, secondly, the provision for " sanctions " in the event of a member of the League refusing to accept the Court's award. Colonel House's suggestions, placed before the President a few months later, had led him, after a careful study, to replace the vague " indirect guarantee " of security of the Phillimore Report, based on arbitration combined with the enforcement of awards, by a " direct guarantee." His draft statutes now proposed to lay down as a cardinal principle that the nations of the League should be assured (the wording was suggested by Colonel House on the analogy of the American Constitution) " territorial integrity and political independence." House had not conceived of this direct guarantee as a rigid formula insusceptible of adaptation to circumstances as they developed, but as an " elastic " expression liable to be influenced by the right of self-determination of the individual nations, and hence subject to modification by the supreme fiat of the League.

Some other fresh ideas came from Colonel House's memorandum. The work of the League was to be administered by a special Secretariat ; an international Court of Justice was to be set up as an integral part of the League machinery ; and, as regards " sanctions " to be enforced against recalcitrants, he preferred the method of the blockade as being more effective and at the same time less brutal than the use of armed force. President Wilson had adopted the idea of a League Secretariat, had at first approved of the international Court of Justice, but later dropped the idea, and had definitely rejected the blockade as a penalty. In his view, when such exalted aims were at stake as Justice and the Prevention of Wrong-doing, it was only fit and proper that stern and bloody weapons should be employed to enforce them.

Thus the President had come to Europe with a hybrid draft resulting from a mixture of the ideas of Lord Phillimore and Colonel House. Almost immediately after he arrived in France two further drafts were brought to his notice in the shape of proposals by the South African, General Smuts, and by Lord Robert Cecil. Grateful for any contribution which might serve to develop and strengthen his pet idea, his dominating conception, of permanent world-peace, he paid close attention to these British schemes. General Smuts put forward four main proposals. At the head of the League he placed a large " Council," which would be endowed with supreme authority. For the administration of the territories to be separated from the Central Powers and from Turkey, and of those parts of Russia which were to be set up as new States, he had devised a system of " mandates." These countries, suddenly orphaned, whose claims to self-determination had been refused by their previous fatherlands, were to be placed under the protection of the League, which should then determine for them by whom

and how they should be administered in future. Thirdly, he was anxious that the smaller nations should be represented in the League ; and, finally, he called for a general limitation of armaments on the part of all members of the League.

Lord Robert Cecil had long been a zealous adherent of the League idea. He was a partisan of the peaceful development of every nation, that is to say, of every white-skinned, civilized nation, for he held sternly aloof from all contact with coloured races. But he took every opportunity of setting his face against the use of the " mailed fist " as an argument among Western nations. He was a master of precise, forceful language, and, what is more, possessed a fund of quiet courage in detecting awkward episodes and bringing them resolutely to the light of day. Lord Robert shared General Smuts's views almost entirely. He agreed with Smuts in visualizing at the head of the League a controlling Council or some similar small and select supreme body, but, coming as he did, a statesman born, from a superior nation trained in politics by the experience of centuries, he was not inclined to rate the capacities of the smaller States as highly as the South African General, and therefore advocated the restriction of membership of the supreme authority to representatives of the Great Powers.

The President of the United States gave an eager welcome to these new suggestions. In the first place he was taken with the idea of giving the League the visible impressiveness and concentrated authority of a " Council." Apart from this elaboration of the administrative machinery, the idea of the " mandate " system immediately appealed to him and won his ready concurrence and approbation. He now embarked on yet another draft, combining all the various precipitates he had obtained from the solutions put forward—Lord Phillimore's suggestions, Colonel House's ideas, the draft statutes of General

Smuts, and those of Lord Robert Cecil—in one concentrated tabloid. This second sketch plan for a League of Nations revealed more clearly than anything else had done the President's method of working, his compiler's mind, his somewhat dilettante tendency to run certain words to death because he had taken a fancy to them, his irrational, almost superstitious side. In his public speeches before he left the United States he was already calling himself a "Covenanter" whenever he spoke of the "Covenant" of the League-to-be. He loved the word, its very sound as well as all its connotations, perhaps because it seemed in a phrase to sum up, in the impressive way he desired, the meaning, direction, and range of his mission. He now gave a hospitable welcome to Smuts's expression "mandatory." It had just that ethical flavour which he was looking for, but had not been able to find for himself, being always a mediocre, infertile creator, but a prompt adopter with a good eye for suitable material, and a resolute adapter. He had started in July 1918, when he first received Colonel House's memorandum on the League, by cutting down the number of articles in the draft statutes to thirteen, and he stuck to this number, preferring to work in any new material from later proposals in the form of addenda and riders rather than as fresh clauses. He now put away his provisionally final draft, of which he had made a fair copy with his own hand in unromantic typescript, with the many others in his collection. But this final draft was by no means the last, for fresh stimuli were to reach his mind later from other quarters—never, be it observed, from his own original thought.

Belated ideas from the Stockholm Socialist Congress flashed across his mind again. The provisions relating to labour legislation must be worded more definitely; a number of amendments would have to be introduced. Delegates came to him from the American Jews—who,

after all, were human beings like the rest of the world—and made suggestions about the protection of racial minorities. General Tasker H. Bliss, the President's shrewd military adviser—an unusual type of soldier compared with the generals of France or any other military Power ; a man with heavy, dreamy eyes which only seemed to come to life gradually as he spoke, but, when aroused by the heat of debate, would flash into an intense, candid fire—this singular warrior, a keen partisan of League and Disarmament ideas, who advocated the earliest practicable withdrawal of the troops so that they might resume their work in factories and offices, also had something to say about the armed forces of the League, if such there were to be. They were not to be employed in the case of internal disorder in any one State. Each country was to be solely responsible for its own arrangements for the maintenance of defence and public order.

The President was loth to disregard any of these ideas, or, at any rate, to leave them unexamined. The only contributions which seemed to him hardly worth consideration were those of his own Secretary of State, Mr. Lansing. Lansing was opposed to all use of force by the League ; not only did he reject the plan of coercing recalcitrant nations by military force, but even the method of the blockade was too harsh in his view. He thought the breaking off of relations with the aggressor would be enough ; he was in favour, not of "indirect guarantees," nor yet of "direct guarantees," but of " negative guarantees." Furthermore, he had grave doubts regarding the mandate system. Might not the United States one day be expected to undertake a " mandate " for some outlandish race at the other end of the earth ? America must keep herself to herself. When he heard his President deliver speeches glowing with moral fervour about the responsibilities of the strong, especially of America, and their duty to devote themselves

to the service of humanity rather than multiply and distribute new rights and privileges, Lansing remained sceptical. In fact, the Secretary of State looked at many things from a very different angle from that of his President. He was seldom consulted, seldom even sent for by the President, who dealt with all important matters in writing and, for the rest, passed Lansing by in silence. He stood apart from the crowd of advisers and idea merchants, and even at conferences he would frequently spend the whole time drawing faces on his blotting-paper. The President paid no attention, therefore, to the Secretary's views on the League of Nations question. He had quite enough data to work on. He was now engaged on his third final draft, and just had time to complete it by the second day of the Conference, when he was called upon to open fire in the battle for his Peace aim, his world-apostolic purpose.

All the Powers were, of course, in favour of the League of Nations. When President Poincaré with his Prime Minister, Clemenceau, visited Mr. Lloyd George in London on December 1, 1918, none of the three had any idea what sort of a person this scholar was, what sort of statesman this President would turn out to be. They had chatted about their plans for the settlement of the Syrian question as part of the reconstruction of Turkey, but, as for the line they were to take with Wilson, they could not even begin to see the way clear. They still had no real conception of how the professor's mind worked, where he was genuine and invulnerable, where he could be put off the scent or talked round. And it was not only the members of the "Supreme War Council"—who automatically became the managing directors of the Conference—who were all at sea as to the real character of this, the most powerful figure in their midst; no one at all had any information except that he had one pet idea, perhaps an *idée fixe*—the League of Nations. So all the Powers naturally vied

with each other in their advocacy of international brotherhood.

Lord Robert Cecil, the spokesman of Great Britain, had put forward proposals in all sincerity. The Italians had worked out their conception of how the nations of the world should regulate their relationships in future. Even the French saw the important functions a League of Nations might perform as an instrument of "security," and the scholarly Léon Bourgeois had drawn up for them, in five lucid theses, the contribution that France might safely make to the problem. There was merely some slight lack of unanimity as to the principles on which the League should be built up and the place that should be assigned to it in the framework of the Peace Treaty. The President of the United States held the view that the Peace Treaty and the League statutes should, as a matter of course, form one single instrument binding upon all signatories. Had he not painfully devised a series of articles (the number had by now grown to nineteen) which covered the whole ground and arranged things in the best possible way, nineteen convenient spans of a great viaduct joining all the nations of the earth, spacious enough to accommodate everything beneath in due order and arrangement? It only remained for them to accept with becoming alacrity the general scheme and plan of his structure. In fact, the Peace Treaty proper, in the President's view, was really only a kind of appendix, showing how the details worked themselves out after the Great War. The League Covenant, however, which embodied the spiritual and ethical lessons of the war, was to be eternal. The details would vary, but the main lines of that great moral inheritance, so painfully won, would stand firm. Thus the President regarded the League of Nations as the all-important constituent of the Treaty. But here, at the outset, doubts were raised even by the British representatives. They were

not sure whether it was not really unwise to start by bringing mundane details into such a direct relationship with ethical obligations, and whether it would not perhaps be better to consider each set of problems separately and evolve a separate solution for each—on the one hand a Peace Treaty, on the other hand a League of Nations. The French were chiefly concerned with the Peace Treaty side, and to get the terms settled and signed, although the memorandum prepared for them by Léon Bourgeois in the quiet seclusion of his study did not show too marked a deviation from their main purpose in regard to the settlement. (One of his primary requirements was the introduction of universal military service by all members of the League, and another was a powerful international General Staff.)

But it appeared that the President of the United States was not to be deterred by any such differences of outlook from pressing and forcing through his own views. The " Council of Ten " now sat daily. Detailed peace aims began to be bandied about. But the President stuck obstinately to his opinion that the League should be the central feature of the Treaty. Two days after he had made his opening speech the British handed in their proposals regarding the League of Nations, and the measure of support they gave him strengthened the President in his determination to listen politely to everything that was said but to go on talking of nothing but the League.

The " Council of Ten " began to gasp for breath. They had visualized a different setting for the first preliminary discussions on the problems of the peace. A few days after the opening of the Conference President Poincaré had made his appearance at a plenary sitting and delivered a tactfully worded speech of welcome to all the delegates, and this solemn proceeding had resulted in the French Premier being elected to the chairmanship of the whole

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Conference. But even the determination of the new chairman, who in this respect showed a great advance on his predecessor, Pichon, failed to divert the President of the United States from his League of Nations, and the discussions dragged on a further four days. At the end of this time the " Council of Ten " decided that the proper and most effective course would be to entrust the investigation of the whole idea of a League of Nations to a special committee. The task of directing this body and expressing himself through it should be the privilege of the President of the United States. This was a great honour for the President, while the new League of Nations Committee was clothed in the splendour and might of its influential chairman, so that the whole idea of the League gained fresh and additional lustre. The " Council of Ten " was enabled by this means to devote itself with greater facility to other important problems, such as the question of Colonies, Disarmament, Reparations.

But the President of the United States, easily fatigued as he was by official business and greatly as these multiple activities seemed to tell on him, was not to be led astray from the path he had chosen either by overwork or by suitably designed forms of relief. It was much to have obtained a League of Nations Committee, but he would only be satisfied when all the nations had signified their concurrence in his plan for the League. The British were so far extremely guarded in their concurrence in the importance of including the statutes of the League with the Peace Treaty. The French were a little more direct ; they said : " the League shall be set up as a part of the Peace Settlement." This sophistical wording expressed their desire for differentiation ; the Peace Treaty and the League were, in their view, two separate things. The President devoted the greater part of his labours to amending and strengthening the wording of the British formula of

agreement. A fortnight from the beginning of the Conference, on January 25, he read out his resolution at a plenary sitting : " This League should be treated as an integral part of the general Treaty of Peace."

The assembly of the nations accepted this proposal, which was then recorded as an agreed resolution. The President of the United States had won his first great victory. He drew a deep breath. Now he was available for consultation on details in the " Council of Ten." Here, again, a battle was blowing up. For three days past the first signs of serious conflict had been showing themselves among these irascible irenophiles.

CHAPTER V

CONSCIENCES AND COLONIES

Without any warning, but much to the satisfaction of all the members of the " Council of Ten " except the President of the United States of America, the word " Colonies " had made its appearance in the debates, first let fall by the Prime Minister of Great Britain. He was entirely ready to make Woodrow Wilson's ethical aspirations his own, and equally ready to keep in mind one of the chief aims which the British Empire intended to pursue at the Conference. It was a fit task for an artist-statesman like Mr. Lloyd George to do equal justice to both readinesses.

Of all the Council members—indeed, of all the delegates at the Paris Conference—none was more mentally alert, none more captivating in his manner, none equipped with a greater variety of organ stops, than Lloyd George, the well-groomed little man with the flowing white mane crowning a pair of rosy, close-shaven cheeks, with his darting movements and telling gestures, obviously rather spoilt as regards the external comforts of life and decidedly attached to them—for instance, his afternoon tea. He lived for the moment and the moment's demands, which he could seize with lightning intuition and put forward with a tempestuous advocacy. His play of oratory had each and every register at its command ; his masterly delivery caressed his hearers like a cloak or swept them away like a torrent. He could vary his tones as he did his pyrotechnic glance : now it was all amiability, a genial reflection of Liberal England ; now it was crafty, at a hint of danger in the debate ; now it showed the sly malice of a fox escaping

from a too obvious trap ; now it shot out shrewdly-aimed lightning flashes, expressed British determination, in which, however, there would be reflected another England, the Britain that everyone knew had sent him to negotiate on strict business lines ; that powerful Britain, Mistress of the Seas, which insisted on being consulted on everything. When President Wilson, with his slow doggedness and laboured mental processes, toiled over a clause in the League of Nations draft, trying to arrive at some specially " elastic " wording in order to ensure its permanence for succeeding generations, Lloyd George was all for elasticity in the interest of permanence and also of easy comprehension. Many problems would, of course, bear differing aspects from one day to the next, and, equally of course, the British Prime Minister would bear a different aspect from one day to the next. His most characteristic note was human sympathy. To be sure, Wilson's idea of international harmony was shared by them all ; morality was always the best policy and possibly, with skilful management, even a safeguard for the future—for Mr. Lloyd George thought sometimes of the future. But in the immediate, living, pliable present his sympathy was at the disposal of all that is human, so long as it was humanly appealing. If one did not clearly grasp this point of view one might be surprised at the extremes into which his temperament led him from one day to the next, from a morning session to an afternoon session, between the beginning and end of one and the same debate. One of the Italian delegates said of him, with a tinge of patronage mixed with relish for his entertaining qualities, that he had a confused mind : " Lloyd George is after several different things at one and the same moment." But that was only his artful way. His secretary, Philip Kerr, admitted that the Premier knew very well how to keep himself free from commitments. What he wanted was what, under the influence of every

new impression, every fresh event, every changing vista, public opinion in Britain wanted ; and that, now, was—Colonies.

On the spur of the moment, therefore, the British Premier suggested that the Council should proceed to discuss the future of the colonies which had been captured from Germany by force of arms, and, further, that, if they were going to talk about colonial questions, they might at the same time deal with the future of the Turkish dependencies. The French Prime Minister, inwardly concerned for the future of Togo and the Cameroons, thought this suggestion a very sensible one. Baron Sonnino, who remembered the British Government's promise of Smyrna to Italy, entirely concurred. All three statesmen tacitly agreed that it was hardly necessary, in view of the pressure of important business, to enlighten the President of the United States regarding the various promises which the Great Powers had made to one another. After all, they must begin to get down to business on other matters apart from the League of Nations, and, as Lloyd George assured the meeting that " the Eastern and colonial questions would present fewer complications," here was a chance for the Conference to register some definite progress.

But the British Premier had made a miscalculation. The President of the United States had set his mind on something more urgent than the settlement of any of the colonial questions, more important than the whole future of these countries—which, in any case, was covered by suitable clauses in his League of Nations draft—and that was the settlement of conditions in Europe. The new frontiers of the civilized nations were a matter of graver concern than any other frontiers. The first and foremost duty of the Conference was to bring to an end the sufferings of Europe. When he heard this, Mr. Lloyd George's human sympathy overwhelmed him, although he was, in point of

fact, very much occupied with visitors. He took his visitors with him the very next morning to introduce to the " Council of Ten." He concurred wholeheartedly with the Council's decision to call upon all European States forthwith to report their wishes and claims as regards frontiers ; but no one could say him nay if, as the leading Ministers of State in the British Empire, he gave his visitors, the Dominion Prime Ministers, an opportunity of voicing some of their wishes and claims in the presence of President Wilson. He could do no less. It was true that the Dominion Prime Ministers wanted to hold on to the German colonies, since Canadians, New Zealanders, and Australians had captured them, and that they displayed no interest at all in the resettlement of Europe. While they were developing their argument, Mr. Lloyd George kept his temperament under due restraint ; it was up to the Dominions to get heated, if they wished, over points on which they felt deeply. His view was simply this—that the colonies should on no account be given back to Germany.

The Italian Prime Minister, Orlando, who hitherto had never opened his mouth in the Council, hastened to express his agreement. Baron Makino, the Mikado's representative, who normally maintained an attitude of lofty aloofness, had evidently guessed that the British Minister was going to deal on the spur of the moment with the question of the colonies, and had intimated his concurrence in advance the day before. If Japan was to get Shantung and the ex-German islands in the Pacific north of the Equator, as promised by the British Government, then he must agree that it went without saying that Germany should be definitely deprived of her colonial possessions. Emboldened by this gratifying support from his like-minded colleagues, the British Premier then proceeded to deliver a long speech dealing with the fundamentals of the whole colonial problem—one of his scintillating,

crystal-clear speeches, calculated to sweep away all opposition. The League of Nations might administer the colonies itself. Alternatively, the League might entrust the colonies to certain specified mandatories. Or, thirdly, the colonies might be annexed. There was no fourth course. At the same time, so far as the British Dominions were concerned, it would seem preferable to consider the disposal of the ex-German possessions, not as a colonial question, but " as part of the Dominions themselves, which after all had conquered them by force of arms."

The President of the United States saw which way the storm was blowing. Exhausted by the rapid exchanges of the debate, his face expressing profound disillusionment, he stuck to his guns and politely but very firmly indicated his dissent. Here was an attempt, barefaced, cynical, callous, to carry on the old traffic in territories and populations, as though he had never proposed the establishment of a League of Nations, as though he had never demanded mandates for the undeveloped countries, for the young nations, as though he had never proclaimed to the whole world that peoples and provinces should no longer be " bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were chattels and pawns in a game."

He looked across to General Smuts, to whom he owed an infinite debt of gratitude for all the stimulating ideas this shrewd, humane soldier had contributed towards the League of Nations. It was Smuts who had first used the word " mandatory," and the President had taken over the idea of the mandate system from him. But in the question of colonies, at all events so far as German South-West Africa was concerned, the Boer general stood for the unconditional surrender of the German colony to his native land. Smuts had, of course, been quite sincere in advocating the mandate system. It was very suitable for the territories to be separated from the Central Powers in

Europe, or for regions to be liberated from the Turk, but South Africa was different; South Africa was not Europe.

In this strain the struggle had already been raging for some days round the future fate of the German colonies, irrespective of the League, oblivious of the League, as if there were to be no League. For President Wilson, however, the whole conception of the League was meaningless if it was only to be set up after the spoils had been divided in the bad old way by recognizing only relative material strength, and bargaining on that basis. The others agreed, in effect, that it was meaningless, and it was precisely the meaninglessness, the *naïveté*, the innocence of the League that appealed to them. They all proposed to revel in morality, altruism, and brotherhood within the holy precincts of the League, but only after the gains from the war had been safely secured, not before. For instance, the French Colonial Minister, M. Simon, stood up and claimed the privilege of "carrying on the civilizing work he had already begun in Central Africa." France had a prescriptive right to the unlimited enjoyment of this territory. He could produce correspondence between the French Foreign Minister, M. Cambon, and Sir Edward Grey dating from the war period. . . . At this point the British Premier took fright. This was not a time to speak of confidential correspondence, or of secret agreements of any sort.

But the President of the United States had had enough. He was not going to allow the very pillars of his League of Nations to be overthrown. All this was an insult to the League. He was not going to allow any bartering of peoples. He took his ground firmly on the system of mandates. He saw more and more clearly that the League must be set up first of all; otherwise it would be stultified by action in other directions even before it came into being. He had

been negotiating for a fortnight, appealing to the consciences of his colleagues, burning with zeal for his sacred purpose, but no one had really supported him except with euphonious phrases. This could not go on. The President of the United States, who had brought to birth this new world-message, this new evangel, had no intention of being a puppet in the hands of politicians. He could show them another side. He threatened to leave the Conference altogether.

At this crisis the figure of Woodrow Wilson stood out, massive, radiant, against the Conference sky. But shadows were creeping up from all sides on the horizon. The days slipped by, week succeeded week, one session of the " Council of Ten " followed another, and still the Conference agenda had, in effect, but one item : the League of Nations. Nothing was accomplished on any other subject. Many other topics came up for discussion, but it was only by way of courtesy if some attention was paid to the affairs of the Czechs, the Roumanians, the Poles, whose representatives were waiting for the fulfilment of their aspirations just as eagerly and impatiently as the delegates of the Great Powers. The President had been able to repulse the first attack on the colonial question, and, as for the veiled hints of secret agreements concluded between the Powers during the war, he appeared to be totally disregardful of these. They did not exist, so far as he was concerned. He paid no attention to them. He regarded them as of no importance : " As the United States of America were not bound by any of the [secret] treaties in question, they are quite ready to approve a settlement on a basis of facts."

But what the President understood by the " basis of facts " was by no means to the taste of the remaining members of the Council. He had derived all his knowledge of the problems before the Conference from reports drawn up by the body of experts on Colonel House's staff, with

whom he had carefully and designedly surrounded himself. When it became necessary to take decisions on new points or unexplored regions of international politics, or peoples and countries as to whose standing, past and future, any dubiety existed, the experts must be consulted again and reports obtained on which the Conference could base its decision. The Commissions which the President visualized as journeying round the globe for this purpose should in his view be composed of experts chosen from various countries. Only the " facts " which they accumulated were to be valid as a foundation for final decisions, at all events for his, the President's, decisions.

Here Lloyd George supported him. The Roumanians had come to the Council and put forward claims for a redetermination of their frontiers. The British Premier saw the difficulty of settling points like that merely by armchair discussions in Paris. A group of competent investigators, some English, some French, some American, some Italian, had better study this question on the spot in the first place. " What sort of investigators ? " asked Orlando. He had no suitable men to suggest ; and they would be difficult to find anywhere. However, the Italian Prime Minister was induced to agree to the appointment of experts to ascertain the " facts " as regards Roumanian conditions. Later on, however, when one day experts made their appearance in other fields, where Italy was more concerned with actual ownership than with facts, he expressed decided objections to the delays inseparable from expert enquiries, and declared that they were not needed. But the President of the United States was adamant, and had his way. A resolution was adopted providing, not only for the employment of experts, but also for the consideration of their reports.

It was a deplorable thing that the President should not be willing to make concessions on any point or modify any of his views.

Clemenceau, as chairman of the Conference, showed masterly skill in getting through the agenda at the meetings of the " Council of Ten." Hardly any of the main speeches lasted more than five minutes as a rule. Clemenceau himself spoke with emphasis and precision, bent on attaining his end with the least possible delay ; Lloyd George in a bewildering stream of words, full of *esprit*, not disdaining the use of little witticisms when he was not in a pugnacious mood ; Wilson very slowly, with conscious dignity in every word, often gazing fixedly into the far distance ; Orlando hardly at all ; Baron Makino retiringly, politely, his words almost inaudible, as, indeed, all his movements were. Sometimes the debates arising from these five-minute speeches grew complicated, and dragged on hour after hour till the " Council of Ten," tired out, broke up without coming to any conclusion ; but often the speech on a point at issue would give rise to no debate and the matter would simply be referred to one or other of the Committees, so that the next speech, on quite a fresh topic, followed immediately, bewilderingly.

It is true that the President of the United States continually placed obstacles in the way of a proper consideration of the question of the colonies, in an unaccommodating, intolerant fashion ; that the question of reparations had not yet even been started on ; that for days a wrangle went on over the degree of publicity to be given to the proceedings of the Conference—the upshot of which was that President Wilson again, notwithstanding the advice of his own Secretary of State, Mr. Lansing, insisted on having his own way and upholding the right of the American public to receive full, accurate, and uncensored reports ; it is true that with all this no great progress was made towards the attainment of all the fervid aspirations with which the Conference had begun its labours ; that, rather, the very opposite of progress had

been made ; nevertheless, there was one topic in which the President showed some genuine interest, exclusively absorbed as he had appeared to be in the birth-throes of the League of Nations. Field-Marshal Haig had come to Paris to urge on his Prime Minister the necessity for early demobilisation, and on the same day as Mr. Lloyd George had fired the first shot in the colonial campaign he had also broached certain military questions at the Council meeting. The British troops, he said, had to be withdrawn, and the disarmament of Germany was therefore a matter of urgency. Could not a special Commission be appointed by the Great Powers to investigate concurrently the question of how a permanent reduction in the burden of military and naval forces and their armaments could be obtained ? The British Premier adroitly drew attention to the points of agreement between the plan and the relative clauses of the League of Nations scheme. Wilson pricked up his ears, and proposed that the question should be more closely examined without delay.

An additional argument was provided by the second delegate from Poland, M. Dmowski. On the day after the President had threatened to leave the Conference, he put in a memorandum to the effect that the new State of Poland, constituting as it did a barrier between Russia and Germany, could not reduce its armaments in any way. The President asked why Poland, in face of the disarmament of Germany, should need any army beyond the forces needed to keep order within the country. Marshal Foch's memorandum had demanded a strong force to keep Germany down along the Rhine frontier, while Léon Bourgeois had raised the question of universal military service. These tendencies were reinforced by the French Minister of Reconstruction, M. Loucheur, who propounded the theory that for Germany war would never cease, but would continue, with other weapons, in the field of

economics, so that France would need Commissions of Control, officers and troops of energy and determination to occupy Essen and supervise the more important German industries. President Wilson's comment on all this was : " A programme of panic ! "

On this point of disarmament the Italians supported the French and not the American point of view, but the President would not give way an inch, either on the question of colonies or on that of armaments. It was all directly contrary to the spirit of the League. The League would find for these problems very different solutions from this effete, bellicose, blood-stained generation. It may be that Wilson received some support from Lloyd George ; it looked, at all events, as though the British Premier were with him on all these points. He made the most of this help, and stubbornly concentrated once more on bringing the League of Nations to birth.

But now it had come to this, that the League of Nations had got on everybody's nerves. All the other delegates began to oppose and obstruct, spitefully, secretly, since they dared not come into the open, but more and more pertinaciously and with daily increasing violence. Even Lloyd George, seeing no progress made over colonies, grew restive. The Dominion delegates were pressing him ; he was anxious to send the troops back to England and conclude peace. The French Prime Minister could say what he liked about the greater sufferings of France, and take offence at Wilson's omission to visit the devastated areas to satisfy himself, by a contemplation of the effects of German Barbarism, how essential Security and Reparations were to France. Lloyd George had to arrive at some definite result. But still the President of the United States pursued his League of Nations, looking neither to the right nor the left.

Now the attack began. The President was amazed to

read, in cuttings from French newspapers translated for him by his staff, reports of confidential discussions in the " Council of Ten," and in the English Press accurate accounts of how he had quarrelled with Mr. Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister, a man who knew how to put his defective hearing to good use, over the Dominion demands or some other controversial point. Finally he made a formal request, in courteous phrasing, without showing any sign of his annoyance, but unmistakably firmly, that nothing which was transacted at meetings of the " Council of Ten " should be repeated or made use of outside. If other members talked about matters that were not ripe for publication, with the result that newspaper discussions took place, he too might have occasion to allow his views on certain confidential transactions to reach the public ear. That hint was sufficient, and the newspapers were promptly silenced.

The President was not to be intimidated either by attempts at exposure by anonymous well-informed, well-primed leader-writers, or by pressure on the ground of the alleged impatience of the war-weary peoples. Everyone went in awe of that gaunt, deadly serious figure, taking his place at the table always with the oppressive air of being the Judge, the Straightener and Liberator of the World, whom none might corrupt, none trifle with. They grew to detest the Olympian mien, the scanty sentences slow-dropping from on high. The regular diplomatists found in him a rival of a type they had never before encountered, and could not make up their minds whether he was a crank or a pedant, a real revolutionary or only a reverend headmaster in disguise. The representatives of the smaller nations were reduced to speechless deference by his pontifical manner, and reserved their infuriated comments for the privacy of their clubs. Field-Marshal Haig declared that Wilson talked to everyone as though they were little

children. Professor Masaryk had once, during his exile in America, stated that the President looked at European affairs through an inverted telescope, and many people now asserted in their irritation that he was doing so still. There was something alien, aloof, rigid about him always. None ventured to hint at his suffering from some organic disease, though this might have accounted for many of his peculiarities, his apparent inhibitions, his forgetfulness, the agitated, almost distorted expression he sometimes wore, and the convulsive twitching of his face after a severe effort at self-control, under his mask of stolidity. But gradually mysterious rumours began to circulate which threw doubts on his immaculacy. None could trace the origin or check the spread of the talk in the clubs about the President's relations with women, his excessive exhaustion, his waste of energy, his weariness, his startling absent-mindedness on occasion. One of the Italian delegates said on his return to Rome : " Wilson lived the life of an Olympian in Paris." It may have been only malicious gossip aimed at the man who was blocking so many politicians' secret aims, and given currency by irritated statesmen in order to discredit him. Be that as it may, the President was certainly able to maintain a strictly watertight separation between his social activities, his " Olympian " relations, and the business of the Conference, so that neither Press attacks nor feminine allurements nor the impatience of his fellow-statesmen could divert him from his purpose. In the League of Nations Committee he managed, by the beginning of February, to carry a proposal to adopt his latest final draft, with a few amendments suggested from the British side by J. Hurst, and from the American by David H. Miller, who had both submitted a draft of their own, as a basis for the definitive wording of the Covenant. That done, he spurred the Committee on to a fresh effort, and used all the weight of

his authority to reconcile last-minute divergences of opinion. He at last saw himself within a bare fortnight, actually within days, of the final approval of the final draft.

His threat to leave Paris and abandon the Conference had caused absolute panic among the Allied statesmen, who began to feel seriously incommoded and to realize that their business arrangements regarding colonies and other matters would not be so simple to negotiate as they had expected. They had done their utmost to carry through their device of setting up the League by an instrument separate from the Peace Treaty, so that the achievement of their schemes could be provided for in the Peace Treaty itself. The League would then have been no more than an academic ethical supplement which would have no practical effect on the actual situation. But the President of the United States had insisted on the League of Nations being embodied in the Treaty, and as an " integral part " of it. Accordingly, the Allied statesmen were forced to devise an alternative method of securing at any rate the most important of their gains. Lloyd George had felt constrained to introduce the Dominion Premiers to President Wilson, though of course there was no suggestion of Old England leaving idealistic America in the lurch. The Australian representative, Mr. Hughes, had blurted out, in his rough, uncouth way, that he wanted to have nothing to do with mandates ; he only wanted the territory and the inhabitants. Yet this had all been of no avail ; the President had rejected even the pleadings of this specialist advocate. But Lloyd George, the man of ideas *par excellence* in the " Council of Ten," did not have to think long before hitting on a new artifice. In point of fact, the League of Nations was already an accomplished fact, for it had been agreed that it should figure as an " integral part " of the Peace Treaty. The British Premier discovered this quite suddenly, in the way spiritual illuminations always come.

Whether the detailed Statutes were actually put on paper now, or a little later, was beside the point. The important thing was that the distribution of mandates for the colonies could take place without further delay, and some progress at any rate could be made with the agenda.

Still the President of the United States remained the "hopeless idealist," the pedant, that he was. A League of Nations Covenant was nothing until it had been threshed out on paper and finally adopted ; till then there was no League, no Covenant. If the colonies were divided up, if any steps at all were taken in violation of the spirit of the League before principles and detailed procedure had been prescribed and enforced by the written Statutes of the League, then the whole idea of the League of Nations would be turned into a farce. The President's chronic pigheadedness finally wrung from the British Premier the confession that he was "filled with despair." He did not possess that steely, obstinate self-control which enabled Clemenceau, as then, to refrain from leaping on his antagonist until the very last moment, when there remained no alternative but to leap. Moreover, Lloyd George was conducting these first open attacks on the President with such incomparable dialectical skill, and the spectacle he presented—a man filled with despair, with his wonderful white mane all dishevelled and his dark eyes looking round at all his colleagues with grief and reproach, a King Lear among politicians—was so eminently calculated to evoke sympathy and emotional response, that the French Prime Minister could safely stay his hand and await results. Lloyd George went on to ask how they could afford to wait until so momentous, so abstruse a document as the League Covenant was completely finished. It would surely be too sanguine to expect it to be completed within ten days. Meanwhile the whole world was longing for peace. He needed peace ; everyone needed it.

It was surprising, in face of this, that the President of the United States again confirmed the estimate of ten days which he had given and which Mr. Lloyd George had questioned. Not so surprising was the sequel : the British Premier, who had been " filled with despair," was now filled with delight at this news, as at a pleasant surprise he had actually been hoping for. If it was really only a matter of ten days, then of course they could wait. If it would be settled in ten days' time, then all was well. If it was only a question of days, then by all means let the crank have his way if he insisted on it. He would even undertake to stir up everybody concerned himself, and make them get the confounded thing finished sooner. And even if it took another ten days still, there were other expedients that could be tried. Perhaps Clemenceau would lose patience and bring off his famous tiger-leap.

The French Prime Minister looked on in grim silence at Lloyd George's new-born enthusiasm for the speedy establishment of the League of Nations. He, too, could just spare ten days more. There were only two courses open to him. He must either seize what France required by a bold leap, or see that the League of Nations on the French model was set up—or, best of all, both at once.

The League of Nations Committee accelerated its activities to a feverish pace.

While these struggles were still in progress, the colonial and League questions had to give place temporarily to another that brooked no delay. The Armistice allowed to the Germans had nearly expired, and the Armistice had to be renewed. A great deal of grumbling at the alleged over-lenience of the terms had come to Foch's ears, from the military party, from the generals in the War Ministry, from those of his own staff, from the Radicals in the Chamber of Deputies. His critics had blamed him especially for

allowing the German troops who had been turned out of the occupied territories and pushed back beyond the Rhine to retire without being disarmed. But for all his sternness towards the beaten enemy, for all his determination to impose his terms on them, even to humiliate them, the *generalissimo* had silenced the worst shouters :

" The Germans have fought well ; I am not going to deprive brave soldiers of their weapons."

At the preliminary conference of army officers in the Bois de Compiègne, held in the same saloon carriage in which the marshal afterwards gave the party of negotiators a quarter of an hour to come to an agreement, there had been not only partisans of altogether excessive demands, but also generals who counselled moderation and prudence : " Don't stretch the bow too tight ! " At first Foch had stiffened the conditions drafted by his advisers, but later on the number of guns to be surrendered had been reduced again, and the time limit for the evacuation of the occupied territory extended. Thus the marshal had shown a certain amount of lenience, even though he would at that time have preferred to go to war. But that decision had rested with the political heads of the Allied Powers. Now that the fighting was apparently over, it was perhaps the soldier in him that, having won the day, was reluctant to seem to underrate the enemy's courage. Be that as it may, appalling as his demands might appear to the beaten enemy, Marshal Foch had acted humanely from his own standpoint, and he was not going to be blamed for this a second time.

Moreover, the *generalissimo* was watching the proceedings of the Conference, and observed that all was not going as he had expected and hoped. He was not an American general who mixed up his profession with ideas of disarmament. Notions such as international brotherhood made him smile. The Conference had had the temerity to exclude him and the rest of the high military officers ; now his time had come

again. He was aiming at a peace dictated by superior force and maintained by the constant day-to-day pressure of an omnipresent sabre-rattling military control. He was seldom able to agree with the Prime Minister. M. Clemenceau had even gone so far as to storm at him—him, the military leader and victorious *generalissimo*—when he had had occasion to return to the subject of the Rhineland vassal state (a necessity in his view), after Clemenceau had already turned down his memorandum advocating this plan. But in regard to the opportunity which now presented itself in connexion with the extension of the Armistice, the marshal and the Prime Minister were on common ground. Obviously the extension could be used as a lever to obtain Germany's agreement to certain things which the Peace Conference had not been able to secure. The Armistice must certainly be extended. But there should be an end to the mere Armistice Agreement ; the time for something more like preliminaries of peace had come. These might be made to include mention of Reparations, even an immediate determination of the amount of the bulk of them. All the main features of a military dictated peace could, in fact, be insisted on in the amended terms of an extended armistice.

But here again the President of the United States imposed his veto ; to increase the severity of the terms already granted would, in his view, be dishonourable. He refused to countenance agreements which would inevitably conflict with the spirit and the letter of the League of Nations ; he would not even listen to them. To the proposal that the enemy should be completely disarmed as quickly and as effectually as possible he saw no objection whatever. Let Marshal Foch complete the job by all means, if anything still remained to be done. The President's view on disarmament was the same as Mr. Lloyd George's. Both wanted to send their own troops home, and the more defenceless the enemy was the sooner their troops could go.

It was this question of a renewal of the Armistice Agreement which brought about the first serious, almost ferocious conflict between Clemenceau and Wilson. Clemenceau made no effort to pick and choose his expressions ; bluntly and brutally he declared that Wilson brought to the comprehension of the most ordinary, practical details of life " nothing but his academic, theoretical, doctrinaire principles." Only by force, he continued, only by the might of her army, could France obtain what in his opinion she required. She required a peace enforced by soldiers. Only soldiers could keep the Germans in their place.

It was the first time that Clemenceau had let himself go. He cared nothing for a chairman's dignity, nothing for anybody. But the President of the United States refused to be either influenced or browbeaten.

Lloyd George kept silent during this incident. He could not help reflecting that the " leap " was not having quite the beneficial effect that he had hoped. But during the dispute the aged Lord Balfour happened to awake from the philosophic contemplation in which he was accustomed to spend the sittings of the Council. He was an enemy of vehemence of any kind, and chiefly anxious for peace and quiet. He knew that the President of the United States would soon be leaving Europe, and was very sceptical as to the League of Nations coming to birth within ten days. What they would do when the President's back was turned was quite another matter, and they would be able to consider it at yet greater leisure. He proposed that the Armistice Agreement should be extended on essentially the same lines as before, but that at all events the " military and naval conditions " of the disarmament of Germany should be settled. This was what the President had had in mind, too, for he wanted to hear nothing more about the soldiers' side of the matter when he returned to Europe, only to concentrate on establishing the New World Order.

The French Prime Minister found himself isolated, and had to give way. This destroyed the last possibility of framing a separate instrument, of finding a by-path by means of which everything of real importance, everything worth fighting for, everything hoped for, could have been secured promptly and independently of all this Salvationism. There was nothing left for it but to join in the procession to the solemn plenary sitting at which the League of Nations was to be formally adoped by all the countries of the world.

CHAPTER VI

WILSON TRIUMPHATOR

The Covenant of the League of Nations was adopted by the delegates of the twenty-seven nations represented at the Peace Conference on February 14, 1919. There was not unanimity, but a majority of fourteen nations gave the League its victory. With emotion the President of the United States had laid before them the final draft, which really had now come to birth, though only on the evening before. Perhaps some of the points were not entirely clear to the assembly. The President singled these out, read them slowly, and gave examples in explanation of them, though his exposition suffered a little from his usual defect of over-abstraction. In his enthusiasm and gratification he forgot the past troubles. As for the mandate proposals in his draft, these also were adopted by resolution and invested with legal validity. The President was overjoyed. He had forgotten everything, even the struggles over colonies. He saw in the men in front of him nothing but harmony and unanimity of purpose.

" It gives me pleasure to add to this formal reading of the result of our labours that the character of the discussion which occurred at the sittings of the Commission was not only of the most constructive but of the most encouraging sort. It was obvious throughout our discussions that, although there were subjects upon which there were individual differences of judgment with regard to the method by which our objects should be obtained, there was practically at no point any serious difference of opinion or motive as to the objects which we were seeking."

The President had no more than this to say of the disagreements with Lloyd George and with the Dominion Prime Ministers. He had no thought even of the great common general staff which Bourgeois had proposed, or of any other part of the French programme for a League of Nations, now that the great liberal League of Nations ideas brought over from America, filled with the spirit of the American Constitution, had won the victory. He was carried away by this apotheosis of his work :

" Many terrible things have come out of this war, gentlemen, but some very beautiful things have come out of it. Wrong has been defeated, but the rest of the world has been more conscious than it ever was before of the majesty of right. People that were suspicious of one another can now live as friends and comrades in a single family, and desire to do so. The miasma of distrust, of intrigue is cleared away. Men are looking eye to eye, and saying, ' We are brothers, and have a common purpose. We did not realize it before, but now we do realize it, and this is our covenant of fraternity and of friendship.' "

The President's speech was followed by one breathing the same satisfaction at the completion of the task, but a deeper concern for practical realities, a desire to indicate aims rather than intone doxologies. The speaker was the man who, perhaps, had been Wilson's principal support in the work for the League, Lord Cecil. Without Lord Cecil and without Lloyd George, who had been a keen supporter of the League plan, not only because he had to reckon with British Liberal opinion, but because, in spite of the difficulties which it made for him, it harmonized with the main lines of his own political ideals—without British assistance the President of the United States would never, for all his apostolic fervour and unbending steadfastness, have lived to see this hour of triumph.

Lord Cecil, too, foresaw better means of regulating

international affairs through the League of Nations than the nations had had at their service in the past :

" The problem which we were engaged in solving was one of great difficulty. As I see it, it was to devise some really effective means of preserving the peace of the world consistently with the least possible interference with national sovereignty.

" You have heard the Covenant, and it is unnecessary for me to dwell on its detail. We have sought to safeguard the peace of the world by establishing certain principles. The first and chiefest of them is that no nation shall go to war with any other nation until every other possible means of settling the dispute shall have been fully and fairly tried.

" Secondly, we lay down that under no circumstances shall any nation seek forcibly to disturb the territorial settlement to be arrived at as the consequence of this peace, or to interfere with the political independence of any of the States in the world.

" Those are the two great precepts which we seek to lay down for the government of international relations. And we have recognized that, if those principles are really to be acted upon, we must go one step farther and lay it down that no nation must retain armament on a scale fitted only for aggressive purposes. I do not doubt that the working out of that principle will be difficult, but it is laid down clearly in this document, and the organs of the League are entrusted with the duties of producing for the consideration and support of the world a workable scheme for carrying it into effect.

" And, finally, we have thought that, if the world is to be at peace, it is not enough to forbid war. We must do something more than that. We must try and substitute for the principle of international competition that of international co-operation, and you will find at the end of this document a number of clauses which point out various

respects in which the world can better discharge its duties by the co-operation of each nation for purposes which are beneficial to the whole of them. They are the examples of what may be done. There are many omissions. There is one clause which points out that in future international co-operation shall be made subject to, and connected with, the League of Nations. Certainly, I should hope that there are such questions as the opium trade, the white slave traffic, and, in another order of ideas, the regulation of the rules of the air, which, besides those mentioned in this document, call earnestly for effective international co-operation. Certain it is that if we can once get the nations of the world into the habit of co-operating with one another, we shall have struck a great blow at the source and origin of all, or almost all, the world wars which have defaced the history of the world.

" Those, I believe, are the principles on which we have relied for the safeguarding of peace ; and, as to national sovereignty, we have thought, in the first place, that the League should not in any respect interfere with the internal affairs of any nation. I do not regard the clause which deals with labour as any such interference. For this is quite certain, that no real progress in ameliorating the conditions of labour can be hopeful, except by international agreement. Therefore, although in a sense the conditions of labour in a country are a matter of internal concern, yet, under the conditions under which we now live, that is not so in truth, and bad conditions of labour in one country operate with fatal effect in depressing conditions of labour in another.

" Secondly, we have laid down—and this is the great principle in all action, whether of the Executive Council, or of the body of delegates, except in very special cases and for very special reasons, which are set out in the Covenant —that all action must be unanimously agreed to in accordance with the general rule that governs international

relations. That that will, to some extent, in appearance, at any rate, militate against the rapidity of action of the organs of the League is undoubted, but, in my judgment, that defect is far more than compensated by the confidence that it will inspire that no nation, whether small or great, need fear oppression from the organs of the League.

" Gentlemen, I have little more to say. The President has pointed out that the frame of the organization suggested is very simple. He has alluded to some respects in which some may think it might have been more elaborate, but I agree with him that simplicity is the essence of our plans. We are not seeking to produce for the world a building finished and complete in all respects. To have attempted such a thing would have been an arrogant piece of folly. All we have tried to do—all we have hoped to do—is to lay soundly and truly the foundations upon which our successors may build. I believe those foundations have been well laid, and it depends upon those who come after us what will be the character and stability of the building erected upon them. If it is merely a repetition of the old experiments of alliance, if we are merely to have a new version of the Holy Alliance, designed for however good a purpose, believe me, gentlemen, our attempt is doomed to failure.

" Nor must it be merely an unpractical effort in international politics. It must be a practical thing, instinct—and this is the real point—instinct with a genuine attempt to achieve the main objects we have in view. And if those who build on these foundations really believe that the interest of one is the interest of all, and that the prosperity of the world is bound up with the prosperity of each nation that makes it up—that goes to compose the family—then, and then only, will the finished structure of the League of Nations be what it ought to be—a safety and a glory for the humanity of the world."

There was loud and general applause when Lord Cecil had spoken. Orlando, the Italian Premier, was still heaving sighs of relief at the thought of the work that had been done, the work of which Lord Cecil had been describing the results. He had himself attended the League of Nations Commission, had sat there with his accustomed taciturnity. But he too—though he had come somewhat unprepared and rather at the last moment into the Commission, as he had, indeed, into the Peace Conference itself—showed the utmost satisfaction at the issue. The next speaker, France's delegate, Léon Bourgeois, was less wholehearted in his tribute ; he was sure that even the completed Statutes of the League now adopted were bound later on to provide many occasions for definition of their intention and scope.

The assembly listened with astonishment to the British Labour leader, Mr. Barnes. The Socialist leader seemed to distrust the fine unanimity of the nations and their desire for peaceful collaboration. From him of all men there came—not, it is true, the demand Bourgeois had made for conscription and a giant general staff—but the demand for a strong army of reliable League soldiery, strong enough to inspire respect.

The whole wide world, however, the speakers for all the nations that until now had known so little of equality, so little of mutual amity, looked on one another here for the first time in brotherly love and reconciliation. The voice of China was heard. The Mikado's emissary offered his congratulations. Rustem Haida, the delegate from the Hedjaz, spoke. There was just one provision which he had not quite understood :

"A long speech would not at present please this assembly, but what I have to say is definite and can be said in a very few words. I have nothing to add to what has been so eloquently expressed by eminent speakers, and it is not for

IN THE GALLERY OF THE TRIANON PALACE BEHIND THE GLASS DOOR OPENING ONTO THE SCENE OF THE SITTING OF MAY 7, 1919

me to add anything to the praise that has been given to the monumental work which gives foundations to an edifice of justice for the small nations. In Clause 19 of the Covenant we read propositions particularly applying to the nationalities that have been liberated from the Turkish yoke, and there the word 'mandate' is used, but the definition of that word is not given. It remains vague and undefined. On the interpretation that will be given to that word depends the freedom of liberated populations. This will be seen when the discussion which is not intended to begin to-day will be instituted.

"For the present I wish to say that this article leaves to the nations liberated from the Turkish dominion the right to choose the Power from which they will ask help and advice. Now, we know that there is in existence a secret convention to divide this nation of ours without consulting us. We ask whether such a convention will be allowed to remain. We must say to the Powers interested in this question that we ask them to declare that such a convention, from the very fact of this Covenant, has become null and void. We thank all the Powers for the part they have taken in the drafting of an act the result of which will be to give welcome guarantees to all the small nationalities."

No one answered. But no answer seemed necessary, for in the first place no speaker would have found support from any other member of the League of Nations, and, secondly, none could have satisfied the enquirer's desire for information or done anything to change the situation. Moreover, it was clearly because he was fully aware of this that Rustem Haida joined in the approval of the adoption of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Never before had a three-and-a-half hours' sitting of this Conference run so smoothly.

On the following day the coast batteries of Brest thundered their salute to the departing President of the

United States. He had set off for home to prorogue the American Congress. He had to lay before America the dearly bought Covenant of the League of Nations, now at last definitely brought into being and presented to all humanity. The President could say to himself that he had not moved a hair's breadth from his plans, from his great ideas ; that he had overthrown Powers who had fought stiffly against his mission, had exerted themselves to defeat his proposals ; that he had conquered them through the yet greater power of purely ethical conceptions. He had been more than a match for the Conference, towering over it, the invulnerable prophet of his faith. Never before since the days of Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon—names that filled him with revulsion—had hero conquered such an empire. That empire's wide moral, ethical territory he, the son of the New World, was bringing to America as the spoils of victory. Never in all history had a triumph to compare with this been achieved.

The firing from the Brest batteries echoed and reverberated. The ship with the floating Stars and Stripes set sail. The quays were still crowded with uncounted thousands who had gathered to greet and acclaim the apostle.

CHAPTER VII

LLOYD GEORGE IN DEEP WATERS

A sense of relief, of release, filled the members of the Peace Conference. Not because the League of Nations had actually been brought into being ; not even because, with that achieved, a formidable, insuperable obstacle to progress had at last been cleared out of the way ; but because the President of the United States had gone off the battlefield. Lloyd George hurried to London, to resume neglected work in the Cabinet which required his personal attention. The Italian Prime Minister went back to Rome. For a time none of the " Big Four " was to be seen in the " Council of Ten." Even the French Prime Minister was prevented from attending its sittings. Clemenceau lay seriously ill, though not dangerously. An anarchist had aimed a bullet at him. It had struck, but not fatally.

The daily meetings of the " Council of Ten " went on without the " Big Four " ; the Four had designated their deputies. Secretary of State Lansing and Colonel House represented the President of the United States, both fully informed of Wilson's ideas and intentions, the Secretary of State having even been present at the meeting at which, on Lord Balfour's suggestion, the conclusion of purely military preliminaries of peace had been resolved on ; Colonel House as the President's closest confidant and the adviser who had more influence over him than any other. Before his departure Wilson had expressly designated House as his representative. To represent Italy in Orlando's place, Baron Sonnino had returned to Paris : a man difficult to move, averse to compromises even where there

was little prospect of getting ahead without them ; but decidedly an abler statesman than his Prime Minister. Lloyd George had left Lord Balfour in Paris ; he sent Winston Churchill to join him.

But more had happened than a mere change of personalities for a period. Within very few days the spirit of the " Council of Ten" was completely changed. Before the attempt on the life of the French Prime Minister his strong will and his undiminished influence had dominated the scene in Paris. The revolver shot had not broken his will, had not affected it in the slightest ; now that he was alone, Clemenceau directed the course of business entirely according to his own ideas from his sick-bed. While still confined to his room he toughly combated President Wilson's plans for defeating the French peace programme. He did not intend that France's security, her economic aims and necessities, should for a moment be allowed to be dependent upon the fanatical world-brotherhood ideas of a man whom he regarded as a theoretician ignorant of the world, a dreamer, perhaps a fool. The President of the United States had left the field of battle. Clemenceau resolved now boldly to go forward and stop at nothing to secure the peace terms which he needed. His plans were facilitated by a visit of his Foreign Minister, M. Pichon, who brought with him Lord Balfour.

Lord Balfour had actually forestalled President Wilson in proposing that the Armistice terms should be renewed without laying fresh obligations on the Germans. But that was already a week ago. Since then Winston Churchill had arrived in Paris, Churchill the Bolshevik-hater, still filled with thoughts of war, filled with the same ideas as Marshal Foch for a promising campaign in the East ; full also of contempt for the League of Nations, which, he declared with conviction, was useless to his country and no substitute for a navy.

Lloyd George had clearly had difficulties in the Cabinet on his return to London. The British Prime Minister was not in a position to act on his own initiative like the President of the United States, who could make or vary definite decisions on his own responsibility without consulting his Ministers, even in opposition to their views. The resolutions of the London Cabinet in regard to policy were as binding on the Prime Minister, under age-long tradition, as on any other member of the Cabinet. Lloyd George undoubtedly fought against the whole traffic in colonies. Such deals were against the principles of a democrat who was almost socialistic in his thinking. Britain had no need of further colonies. She had ample territory. Britain's one true war aim, on which virtually her whole population was unanimously and determinedly set, was the destruction of the German navy. The British Premier had doubted whether the Germans would really deliver up the ships demanded of them. At best he had expected some *coup*, probably the scuttling of the ships by the Germans themselves. He had no interest whatever in adding the German ships to the strength of the British navy. The one thing which mattered in his view was their elimination, no matter how. The year 1917 had been one of grave anxiety for Britain. It had been uncertain whether the British shipyards would be able to build sufficient craft for the anti-submarine warfare, whether, indeed, they could keep up with the all-essential requirements for the navy. Never again must anything of that sort be possible. Now, however, the German navy had been bagged ; the Germans had actually handed it over. It no longer existed. Britain had attained her principal, her first, her universally demanded war aim.

Beside that victory, colonies were a small matter. Nor was the question of Reparations a vital one for Britain. The principles of the peace began to acquire definiteness in Lloyd George's mind. This unceasingly active little man,

personally known to every man in his Party, on confidential terms with all of them, this popular Calvinist who in Nonconformist Wales had taught all the little communities to build their own little churches, who hated nothing so much as the feudal Anglican High Church (except, indeed, the House of Lords), this protagonist of Irish freedom, taxation reformer in the interest of the poor, initiator of the British social insurance and old age pension systems, was at heart a keen democrat. Now he was receiving General Malcolm's reports from Germany, describing how the old system was really ended, how the revolution was establishing itself slowly but surely, and every day more visibly. It suddenly began to be clear to him that a New Germany was coming into being. Proceeding from very different basic ideas from those of Clemenceau, Lloyd George had no intention of permitting the complete destruction of a Germany really developing into a democratic State, even, perhaps, actually one already. Lloyd George was not, however, merely a man governed by basic ideas ; he was at the same time a politician, and a temperamental one at that.

His temperament had made him, ever since he had arrived at manhood, a man whose whole life was bound up with political activity. Wherever there was a movement for reform, there he had been. Among the workers by hand and brain he had always been active in every direction which led through the people to power. All his utterances had been addressed to the people ; he had wielded his oratory as an instrument of popular leadership. He spoke to the masses, appealed to individual types among them with whom he happened to be familiar, based his case on them. At every turn his temperament guided him to the need of the moment. He never hesitated, but grasped with lightning intuition and turned at once to account the moment's opportunity. He wasted no thought on the past, and troubled little about the future ; of neither was he conscious except

in remote outline. He acted more under general impressions than any close criticism, and did nothing that ran counter to his instinctive feeling even when working for distant ends. His one concern was to do the thing that would get matters forward at the moment. Events might succeed one another with headlong speed ; he dashed ahead with them. If the hour called for a *volte-face*, at once he made it. The man who carried conviction in speaking to him yesterday was right. The man who carried conviction in saying the opposite to-day was still more right. He liked best the broad generalizations of a personal report, had no love for files and submissions. He was personally acquainted with everyone. If he wanted shells, if production was not adequate, it was not the Departments that he first consulted ; he would telegraph to some director of a munitions factory whom he knew and ask him to lunch. He would get his shells. Hardly ever did he wait for the reports from his own Ministry ; he had always already had tea with a private informant or talked at some hotel with a returning diplomat. His temperament kept him in continual activity ; he must be initiating, discussing, surrounded with listeners, must always be satisfied that he was getting something done. In December 1918, in the midst of a countless throng, he had turned a cask on end, jumped up on it, and, with a toss of his mane, shouted in that warm baritone voice, full of conviction :

" Yes—we shall go through the pockets of these Germans ! "

He had promised the Londoners the drama of an impeachment of the Kaiser. That had been in the excitement of the elections. Now he had long forgotten the upturned cask. What would be the end of the Kaiser drama, whether anyone would remember it, he did not know. But he had been equal to a thousand situations, and would certainly find a speech to meet the latest. He could always toss that

mane, the gesture never failed of its effect, nor did the warm tones of the rich voice. Slowly, as the months went by, with the German navy no longer existent, and the messages coming in from General Malcolm, Lloyd George's human, democratic principles came again to the fore. But while he was himself receptive, his Cabinet showed him in its own attitude how difficult was the return to humanity and good sense and reconciliation.

The Cabinet reminded Lloyd George of all the obligations to which Great Britain was already committed. The idea of the League of Nations was a great, an enormous step forward in the ethical life of the nations. But the war had been hard, had brought frightful perils. If the Dominions, if Japan and Italy had not lent their aid, it might have been lost. But none of them had been prepared to come in for no reward. Italy in 1915 had negotiated with both sides, uncertain which of the belligerent Powers would pay the best price for the allegiance of her troops. She had no qualms over abandoning the Triple Alliance. Count Leopold Berchtold, the Austro-Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, had omitted to communicate the ultimatum to Serbia in due time, before delivery, to Italy. Count Berchtold had had his own definite reasons for the omission, for he had evidence that every confidential communication made by the Dual Monarchy to Rome was passed on by this comrade in the Triple Alliance to the St. Petersburg Cabinet before the day was over. In any case, Italy had formal justification of a sort for cutting herself loose from the Triple Alliance. The Danube Monarchy offered too little. Britain offered more. The Treaty of London of 1915 assured to Italy Dalmatia and Istria, the islands off their coasts, the Trentino and Trieste, South Tyrol up to the Brenner, the districts of Gorizia and Gradisca, even the islands of the Dodecanese ; finally, the right, " in case of the partition of Turkey, to a share equal to theirs " (those of

Great Britain, France, and Russia) "in the basin of the Mediterranean," if the kingdom of Italy decided to stab its former ally in the back. Roused by Salandra's proclamation of *sacro egoismo*, Italy had secured at St. Jean de Maurienne yet more : Smyrna was to belong to her after the war. After all this, the kingdom had cloven to its new allies in a loyalty that lasted right up to the end of the war. But now there were the debt obligations to be met. Both of the Allies—Britain, perhaps, even more than France—had plunged, frequently together, recklessly into debts and obligations. To win Roumania for the common crusade against the Central Powers, she had been promised—in August 1916—Transylvania, the Hungarian Banat, and Bukovina. There were quite definite arrangements for the partition of the Ottoman Empire. France had come to terms with Russia in March 1915 with regard to the north of Asia Minor. Britain had not absolutely definite knowledge of the fact, but France had agreed with Russia over the latter's age-long aspiration for Constantinople. Had Russia not been assured this war aim she might have abandoned the war. But if the north of Turkey in Asia was already shared out there was no reason why the south should not also be distributed. In May 1916 Britain had made definite arrangements for this with France, in the Sykes-Picot Treaty. Nor had Japan come into the war for nothing. At first the Japanese had been kept waiting. But in 1917 their navy was wanted, their help needed against the enemy submarines in the Mediterranean. The Japanese only seriously came into the war after they had been promised—on February 16, 1917—Shantung and the German islands in the north Pacific.

Then, so that everything might be quite clear, the German colonies were disposed of—still before the war was over. France had made sure, first of all, that she should receive the Cameroons and Togo. These had to be

conceded to the French, as otherwise they would have made difficulties over the territories on which the Dominions were counting. For Britain had entered into binding agreements with the Dominions as with other States. The Dominions were masters of their own troops. They would not have sent them into the war on any other terms.

The British Prime Minister was not unaware that all this trafficking in territories and populations and other people's property had little demonstrable moral justification. Nor was it easy completely to reconcile the appropriation and sharing out of all the world's goods with the spirit of the League of Nations, which he was honestly anxious to promote. But his Cabinet insisted that Britain must keep her pledged word, even to the Jews, for whom a new national home was to be created in Palestine in accordance with promises given by the Cabinet to Lord Rothschild and the great and wealthy Jewish families of Britain in return for their financial assistance. The deal which most deeply disgusted Lloyd George was that which had been made with Italy. In Poland he saw a nation of rebels whom he would never willingly have assisted against Britain's former ally, Russia. He still hoped that the day would come when the Bolsheviks would be overthrown ; then the old Russia would reappear in some form and he would re-enter into friendly relations with her. He had no love for the Poles. As for Italy, her whole attitude was in his eyes simply one of treachery. He would have Britain pay Italy just so much as it was absolutely unavoidable for her to pay in order not actually to break her word. The Jewish State in Palestine offered no very serious difficulties, even if the Jews' Arabian neighbours were offended. But in spite of all the difficulties they presented, there was no escape for Britain from the fulfilment of the promises made to Japan and the Dominions. Japan had been Britain's actual ally ; and as for a quarrel between the mother country and the Dominions—who had

their separate constitutional individualities and their own governments, who could actually turn their backs on Britain if they chose—he certainly could not allow such possibilities to arise for the sake of the German colonies.

Between principles and necessities—necessities which the Cabinet impressed on him and to which he saw that he must bow—Lloyd George resolved, as always, on the way out which the moment offered. The League of Nations, which he had accepted and helped to create, was to be set up. Once more, and once only, the unclean deals must be allowed to pass. For everyone was shouting for his promised solatium, determined to get it, calling on Britain to see that he got his price. Lloyd George would strike off the reckoning as much as there was any means of disallowing. After the settlement with the Allies there would still remain the League of Nations. That would prevent anything of this sort in the future. The League was organized to that end. The President of the United States was demanding that justice should be done here and now. Lloyd George was for justice as soon as Britain had emerged from her difficulties and commitments. So it was that the British Prime Minister was able with the same ardour and conviction to advocate the creation of the League of Nations and the partition of great areas of the globe—the ardour and conviction which he could bring into play on all occasions for whatever it was essential that he should secure if he was to get ahead—even if to onlookers it seemed at times that this conviction and that were irreconcilably at issue with one another.

The President of the United States was to be away from Paris for four weeks. The obligations under the secret agreements would have, in the end, to be met somehow. Lloyd George had had enough of fighting over them. He had it definitely from the Cabinet that Britain would keep her word. Perhaps there was still time for the matter to be

put through before the President's return. The wrangling was a burden to him ; the whole situation was uncomfortable. He found no pleasure in constantly meeting Clemenceau. There were many points on which he did not share the French Premier's views. If, however, the colonial question could be settled, if it was possible to secure a binding settlement of various matters which were not altogether in harmony with the letter and the spirit of the League Covenant, he did not intend that it should be he with whom the President opened new exhausting discussions on his return from America. That the French President would do all he could in every direction to push matters forward, Lloyd George knew. For himself, he proposed now to look on for awhile from afar.

But he sent to Paris as his representative the militarist Winston Churchill, an open enemy of the League of Nations.

CHAPTER VIII

AMERICAN STATESMEN

Exactly a week after the departure of the President of the United States, Lord Balfour presented to the " Council of Ten " a new suggestion, in the form of an official motion —couched in the meditative language of philosophic calm, with the perfection of style of which he was a master as no other among the members of the Peace Conference. At the critical moment he had cut short the heated controversy between Wilson and Clemenceau on the question of the extension of the Armistice Agreement with the proposal that the conditions should remain as they were. Later, in company with M. Pichon, the French Foreign Minister, he had visited the sick Clemenceau, and subsequently there had been an interchange of views between Winston Churchill and Marshal Foch. And now Lord Balfour proposed that, after all, it would be better at once to incorporate the essentials of the peace terms in the preliminaries of peace.

Amazing as was the turn-about, no one but Lord Milner made any comment in the " Council of Ten." Lord Milner had witnessed the dispute between Wilson and Clemenceau of the week before, and also the solution found for it by Lord Balfour. He did not ask what it was that led Lord Balfour now to spring on the Council the exact opposite of his proposal of a week before, but he suggested that an agreement which had been definitely arrived at when the President was with them ought not now to be varied. Lord Milner was, however, alone in his view. M. Pichon, with whom Lord Balfour had visited Clemenceau,

welcomed the noble Lord's proposal and said that the French Prime Minister agreed with it. " Without prejudice to the decision of the Supreme War Council to present to Germany shortly the military terms of peace on land and sea and in the air," it was " desirable " that the " approximate future frontiers of Germany," her economic obligations, the extent of her responsibility for infringements of the laws of war, and other important issues should definitely be settled. It was even a matter of urgency. Lord Balfour proposed that it should be dealt with at latest within sixteen days, certainly before the middle of February. Lord Balfour was far from labouring the point that the President of the United States intended to be back in Paris by the middle of February. He did not once mention the President. Why should he, when there were sitting in the " Council of Ten " both Mr. Secretary of State Lansing and Colonel House? Either of these gentlemen was qualified to represent and speak for the President.

Colonel House was a man from Texas, open and sympathetic in manner. Everyone knew his " irresistible " personal charm, his boundless zeal in uniting all hearts in peace and harmony. For years Colonel House had been Wilson's friend and much more. As confidant, adviser, inspirer, as the unceasingly active, self-sacrificing helper, overflowing with human kindness, who arranged meetings between the President and important personalities, and kept the President informed of details not otherwise or not easily available, he had gradually acquired increasing influence over President Wilson. One day before the war, at the instance of the American Ambassador, the Emperor William had received him in audience ; the colonel had been represented to the Emperor as an important American military officer, though his colonelcy was only an honorary title. He had talked to the Emperor with the freedom of an American about British-German issues and about the

threatening clouds over Europe. The Emperor had listened very thoughtfully and attentively, almost an event when it is borne in mind how he is usually represented as giving audience ; then the enthusiastic colonel had volunteered information as to his impressions in England. After this the political importance of the colonel from Texas, in so far as any doubt of it had existed, and his statesmanlike qualities were taken for granted in the United States. He accepted no office or honour. Nor did he ever speak his mind in public ; far from it, for he regarded it as his principal task to encourage the President, who often needed a little pushing, in his action or in a new initiative. He knew Wilson's preference for written communications. He knew that nothing so immediately impressed the President as the written word. Frequently, therefore, he sent him little notes which, considering that they were sent from a colonel of soldiery from Texas, had a piquancy all their own :

> " Dear Governor.—I believe that what you have said to-day will hearten the people of the world as nothing you have said before. It was complete and satisfying."

On another occasion he wrote, with reference to a speech of the President's :

> " Dear Governor.—The very best you ever made.—E. M. H."

Mr. Ray Stannard Baker, in his *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, quotes another of these " little pencilled notes " :

> " Nothing could have been better. It has made assurance doubly sure.—E. M. H."

One thing was clear, that the colonel impressed many people as a personality and that anyone who had his ear

could easily find the way to the President's. In any case he knew exactly what he considered important enough to go into the President, and equally exactly what he would keep from him. It was certainly a misfortune that it was often left entirely to him to decide this question of relative importance. For the truth was that sometimes the open and engaging soldier entirely failed to comprehend what was being discussed with him. He could write graceful " notes " about the general impression received from a speech or address delivered by his Chief, but would fail to understand or appreciate most important communications that foreign statesmen might make to him. The colonel had another weakness. While his charm captivated everyone he met, while with his geniality, his cheerful, easy-going temperament he found himself everywhere the centre of attraction in society, amid the stern realities of the conference table this much-sought-after and much-fêted man never grasped what was going on between those present. They might be hopelessly at issue with one another, full of active, unappeasable hostility : the Colonel would carry home with him an impression that the utmost harmony had ruled. Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, said of his colleague André Tardieu, the tireless attendant at every Commission, the man who knew all about every quarrel, the profound expert in every matter of fact or feeling, personality or policy at the Conference, the man who could divine as no other the Premier's own feeling and his most secret thoughts, " He is my best man ! " The President of the United States said no less of Colonel House. And now this same Colonel House, this accurate diviner and best interpreter of Wilsonian intentions and Wilsonian plans, represented his " dear Governor " in the " Council of Ten."

Needless to say, he agreed with Lord Balfour's proposal. Nothing could be better calculated to get matters rapidly

forward. Lord Milner, true, was standing there like the threatening messenger of Conscience, of the duty of loyalty to the President. But, with the best of wills, all that the colonel was capable of was the remark that there was not the slightest difference of view between the members of the Conference.

Mr. Lansing, Secretary of State, had no objection at all to the terms of peace being at last laid down, although he, too, with Lord Balfour, with Lord Milner, had been present at the sitting of the " Council of Ten " in which the limitation of the preliminaries of peace to military matters had been discussed in Wilson's presence. The President had gone away without giving the Secretary of State any instructions. It was not clear whether he had done so because the Secretary of State had been present at the sitting and so needed no instructions, or simply because it was his practice to have as little to do with his Secretary of State as he could help. Lansing, however, regarded his President's statesmanship as of the quality of an opium addict's fantasies. For him the League of Nations was a Utopia. For him policy meant American policy, serving American interests and concerned only with those. The President was merely involving his country in complications. The world was not made up of ethical and spiritual conceptions. If Lansing spoke it would be as far as possible of concrete questions of territory or economics, or, if there was no help for it, cables. He wanted peace at top speed. He wanted America's earliest possible return to America. He was happiest of all when the discussions were kept to realities, and next happiest when he was successfully warding off the dangers of his President's Utopias. What Wilson might do when he came back was a matter of indifference to him. Everything connected with the President was a matter of indifference. Here, too, was Colonel House next him, at sea as usual, with his disarming smile,

helpless as ever, unequal to the situation, but invincibly enthusiastic. Perhaps the President had thought it all over. The Secretary of State concurred with Lord Balfour's proposal.

Cautiously Baron Makino put one more question : were the German colonies being dealt with as well as the approximate German frontiers ? Lord Balfour could see no reason to object to this. If everything else was being settled—Reparations, economic questions, frontiers—it was best to divide up the colonies while they were about it. Armistice and League of Nations had really nothing to do with one another. It was, therefore, quite unnecessary to return to the subject of the League.

Baron Makino was as keen as any of the others to get quickly to work on settling the new order of things. He was thinking of Shantung. The main thing was not to lose time. For all the work on the preliminaries of peace would be wasted labour unless the Treaty was ready, presented in Spa, signed by the Germans, before the *George Washington* got back to re-anchor in Brest Harbour.

CHAPTER IX

THE SHADOW OF MONROE

Whether he was playing "shuffle-board" on deck, affecting gaiety, telling yarns at table, or singing merry old shanties with the sailors, heavy cares hovered about the President of the United States on his return voyage to Europe. In his fervid address in the Metropolitan Opera House of ten days before he had once more proclaimed to the Americans that nothing should turn him aside from the erection for humanity of the edifice of the League of Nations, that superstructure of which the foundations were already laid by American idealism and American liberty. But a vague apprehension had come over him, since his return to America for the adjournment of Congress, and had more and more taken possession of him while he was in his own country. It was concerned with the actual realities of American thought and feeling. America, for whom he spoke—America, the sole source of his strength—America, through whom alone he could carry his proposals, was possibly swayed by ideas quite at variance with his own. Perhaps the Americans' real aims were entirely different from Woodrow Wilson's.

Great, in any case, was the number of the President's opponents in the United States. Idle, perhaps, and unjust were the rumours which were on the wing in that country of naïve and aggressive conventionality about the personal life of the President. It might be that envy was responsible for directing them against a man occupying the highest position of dignity in the State. The men who stood nearest to him confirmed, it is true, the stories of the sort of

feminine society frequented by their Chief, who had lost his wife during the war and had already aroused a good deal of comment by marrying again very quickly. They themselves had spread the stories, especially at the time of the conclusion of the Armistice, when, gossip said, festivities amounting almost to orgies followed hot on the heels of one another. This admixture of personal and all-too-human predilections with the cares and the work of a statesman was in any case not respectable. It would have been inconceivable in a country like France, reprehensible anywhere else. But in no State was the supreme head so at the mercy of public judgment and censure as in America. Especially in those States which were distinguished for narrow puritanism, many people would rather have had some other President than Woodrow Wilson, whose puritanism was obviously without substance.

But even in quarters where his compatriots' thoughts were not centred on human failings—which, of course, had no existence in the United States and would not have been tolerated there—even in such quarters there was no welcome for Wilson's gospel of humanity ; there was no interest in anything beyond the one subject of America : America's traditions, her continued prosperity, her peace and comfort unfettered by the world outside. For two years America had been at war, a war on a distant continent ; now she was alive to her own interests once more : what, after all, did that whole distant hemisphere matter to the American people, to the Continent of the Monroe Doctrine ?

For a while the American people had been roused to enthusiasm for the League of Nations. But the longer world trade languished, the longer the soldiers—two millions of them—remained in idleness across the ocean, instead of getting ahead with business, the more firmly rooted in the nation's confidence grew the wise and honoured President

Monroe and the more the hostility grew to that other President, Woodrow Wilson, whose League of Nations ideas were merely pushing America into further complications. Monroe's legacy, which had grown into an organic element in the Constitution, made two fundamental demands of the people. It required all the American States to unite to beat off any Power that attempted aggression on the soil of the Continent—a joint guarantee of the security and independence of each individual State. It also forbade all armed American intervention outside the Western Hemisphere. Suddenly the realization spread that the President of the United States, who had already made a breach in the Monroe Doctrine by involving his people in the European War, was once more upsetting America's fundamental law through the League of Nations. Forgotten was the cry of the industrialists over the interference with their right to trade at the time when the plums were at their choicest, forgotten all the moral indignation throughout the country over the alleged barbarities of the Central Powers, the shouts for a punitive campaign for Freedom and the Rights of the Weak. Even men like ex-President Taft, Wilson's predecessor, who had nothing but praise for the ideal of international co-operation in times of peace, showed concern for the preservation of the Monroe Doctrine. There was nothing to compel the President of the United States to consult the Cabinet if he wished to propound and elaborate the idea of a League of Nations and secure its acceptance by his Allies. He could do as he thought fit on his own responsibility. Later, however, the American Senate would have to give its assent. It would have to approve the President's action by a two-thirds majority. Only then would the arrangement which the President had freely entered into as the right one in his opinion become binding. Only then would it have juridical validity. But it was uncertain what the Senate

thought of the League of Nations and its possible reactions on the Monroe Doctrine. The President himself was without knowledge of the Senate's attitude. All that he knew was that this time, during his return, the enthusiasm had been less than when he first sailed. Criticisms, doubts, and dissent had raised their heads. The President had left Europe full of the triumph of having piloted the League of Nations into port with the approval and co-operation of his Allies. Now there were to be heard objectors who threw doubt on the approval of the Americans.

Heavy cares hovered about the President.

From the first moment of his return to Paris he was buried under an avalanche of work. A memorandum was transmitted to him from Marshal Foch. Memoranda came from the Italians, the Jugoslavs, the Japanese, Greeks, Albanians. All were presenting themselves before the just judge of the New World Order, who had to see to it that their aspirations were fulfilled.

Colonel House had gone to meet the President. While Wilson was still in America the colonel had kept him informed of the remarkable happenings in the " Council of Ten." It did not transpire whether he did so from qualms of conscience or merely in his childlike innocence of all statesmanship. But thereafter the President no longer showed himself the same cordial and trusting friend of the colonel's as before. In any case, he threw himself into his new labours with undiminished spirit, fully determined to abandon none of his aims, nothing already achieved, even if his own representatives had thoroughly upset his plans.

He sprung on his Allies a public declaration that the League of Nations remained an " integral part of the Treaty of Peace." No preliminaries of peace, no separate agreement—which, in any case he would not recognize—could alter that fact. For that matter, the Allies had quite failed to bring their proposed preliminaries of peace into

port. The date which they had set themselves for this—March 8—had long gone by, but the difficulty of agreeing on details had been too much for them. They had wrangled over the details until now they had the President back again after all. The French Prime Minister had himself realized that it was impossible, in any case, to make much progress with the peace terms without either Wilson or Lloyd George present. Both were now back in Paris. Ruthlessly Wilson set to work to destroy the plot that had been hatched behind his back.

But in his secret heart his principal care, incessantly occupying his thoughts, was America's possible, even probable attitude towards the League of Nations. A cablegram came to him from ex-President Taft. It followed on a communication from Senator Hitchcock which had reached the President before his departure from New York and had contained the same advice. If, said the cablegram, the Covenant of the League of Nations failed explicitly to recognize the Monroe Doctrine, if America was not given the opportunity of withdrawing from the League after a specified time, if American territory was not expressly assured against cession to any foreign Power, then President Wilson had no possible chance of success. If these things were not secured, then, even if the Allies signed, it was inconceivable that the American Senate should accept the League of Nations. The cablegram proposed an addition to the Covenant :

" Any American State or States may protect the integrity of American territory and the independence of the Government whose territory it is, whether a member of the League or not, and may, in the interests of the American peace, object to and prevent the further transfer of American territory or sovereingty to any Power outside the Western Hemisphere."

The President read the proposal with a heavy heart.

Almost it wrecked all that he had attained in Paris. America herself had dealt him a real stab in the back. He was facing bitter opponents, who were after an entirely different peace—entirely different in spirit, with altogether different gains from those which he envisaged. The prospect of overcoming them through the power of his own country at his back had suddenly become problematical. It might be that at any moment he would find himself suddenly isolated, rejected by Europe's decisions, disowned by America's. He must do everything possible to save his work, everything possible to find a way out. One thing only he would not do : he would not abandon the struggle. Never would he draw back.

CHAPTER X

THE FRENCH PROGRAMME

While the President of the United States was brooding over the cablegrams which had come from New York to threaten the destruction of all his work, there broke out one day, not anticipated by him in the remotest degree and yet to all appearance deliberately invoked, the violent storm which had for months been hanging over the Conference, and now, inundating it with all the accumulated problems, all the secret claims and passionate demands, all the opposing ambitions and mistrust and undying mutual hatred of the victorious Allies, threatened in a few days to overwhelm and sweep away the whole of the peace negotiations.

Now, for the first time, each of the " Big Four " realized that none of them knew what the others were determined on ; each knew only that its neighbour wanted something different from, and incompatible with, its own ambitions and its own set programme. In the middle of March the British Prime Minister had proposed week-ends in Fontainebleau to attain clearness as to the general feeling of the Conference. In long, quiet walks in the park of the old palace he tried to envisage the general outline of the peace as he conceived it from the British standpoint. It was rather late in the day for this, but still, he made the attempt. Meanwhile his secretary, Philip Kerr, described the situation as it appeared to him from the impressions he had brought away from Paris. Philip Kerr had tried to come to terms with Tardieu, Clemenceau's confidant, knowing that he had in his pocket the French peace

proposals completely worked out from the French standpoint; but the more he penetrated through Tardieu's reserve the clearer it became to him that Tardieu was unwilling to be tied down even to the most exorbitant and incredible demands. There was always the possibility that still harsher, still better terms could be extracted for France. As to President Wilson's ability, with all his fixity of purpose, to realize his passionate desire for a world peace modelled on the American plan, Philip Kerr was quietly sceptical. The danger that the President had sensed in his first moments of apprehension, the torturing fear that the day might come when America would completely desert him, was openly discussed by Americans in conversation with Kerr a hundred times a day. They told him of another America than Wilson's, of the strong opposition to the professor among many Americans, who were determined to approve nothing that he did because they felt themselves discredited in some way by him and meant to bring him to grief. It was clear that these opponents had one settled determination—to avoid any sort of entanglement in European problems. They knew nothing whatever of Europe. They had no earthly interest in Europe. It was "a bad place." There were few people in the New World who had anything better to call it than a modern Sodom and Gomorrah. Security Pact, League of Nations, and everything connected with them, were Europe's business.

Kerr grew more and more doubtful of the possibility of any effective imposition of his will by the President of the United States. Lloyd George did not reveal his own view. In Fontainebleau, in the long quiet walks, he discussed everything at great length. It seemed to Kerr that the Prime Minister, although he viewed a hundred things in every possible aspect from a hundred different angles, was determined not to commit himself to anything. Possibly Lloyd George's readiness to consider any point of view

and to be tied to none was a simple matter of technique—the technique of mastering the situation from moment to moment.

The storm which had broken over the Conference soon obliterated its recent concerns, the demands of the Italians and Japanese. These quickly disappeared ; the President was not to be brought to consider them either by visits or memoranda. What now stood out, dominating, threatening, inexorable, inescapable, was the problem of France. Clemenceau, President Poincaré, Marshal Foch—the French Prime Minister was not altogether independent, since these other two had behind them widespread eager support from the country—the whole country, the French public, was determined to be put off no longer. The war had been over now for four months. It had been won. Yet peace was still delayed. Still the heads of States were talking, talking. The scaffolding had shot up of abstract ideas like the League of Nations. Clemenceau cut short all this talk. There were a number of plain, everyday, concrete questions to be settled ; he enumerated them in the " Council of Ten "—security, armaments, reparations. There was a whole body of interconnected problems, with countless subsidiary questions. He was not prepared to agree to a single day's further delay in getting down to them.

Security—that meant the future " strategic frontier " between France and Germany, the new solid barrier between the Germans and the " Western Democracies," as André Tardieu described the new order, not without applause from Marshal Foch, whose recent memorandum had made the same demand for the Democracies of the West. Security—that meant the entire and absolute disarming of the enemy, the supervision of his armaments and troops, of his munition making, for all time. Security—that meant the erection of a " sanitary cordon " on

Germany's Eastern frontiers. A new Czechoslovak State was good. But Clemenceau was not too keen about anything that had arisen from the old Austria-Hungary, even if it was France's friend. A "strong Poland" was indispensable. A large Polish army was consequently a necessity. Between the barriers of the Democracies in the West and the power of Poland in the East, Germany would be kept in order, in subjection. But even then France would not have perfect security. National power was the product of economic power: Germany must be made "economically a cripple." France had paid a heavy toll in lives and property. Reparation had been agreed to. But a way must be found to make of the claim for security and reparations a single grand triumphal unit to effect the complete downfall of the vanquished enemy. Security—that was also an element in reparations. Only technically, only in treatment, were they separable from the military and political demands. On the subject of reparations, as of all else, the French Prime Minister intended that France's views should no longer remain obscure.

Germany had to pay the bill for this war. The peace terms which the President of the United States had proclaimed before the Armistice had made it impossible to demand an indemnity for the costs of the war. But the French programme of reparations included a new idea—that the claim should cover the pensions payable to the relatives of the victims of the war, to the war wounded and to the disabled. In any case, the amount due for reparations would in this way be substantially driven up, even if it were still left quite indefinite. Professor Keynes, an authority on public finance, had placed before the British Prime Minister in November 1918, at his request, a calculation of the amount of reparations which would be within Germany's capacity to pay. The Professor's figure corresponded, in his view, approximately to the amount of

the damage actually done during the war. He had proposed that Germany should be required to pay in twenty-five to thirty years a sum of ten to fifteen milliard dollars. But M. Loucheur, the expert employed by the French Government, had arrived at a sum which far exceeded even the fantastic sum of one hundred and fifty milliards of dollars which Lloyd George had adopted in his December election speeches. Loucheur wanted to demand of Germany two hundred milliards. The Americans had other ideas of the payment which might properly be required of Germany. Mr. Lamont, their expert, had made it only fifty-eight milliards. Very soon after President Wilson's return a special commission met to try and bridge over the differences. Mr. Montagu, M. Loucheur, and Mr. Davis, the American representative, sought for a figure on which they could all agree. They were concerned only with reparations in cash, for reconstruction and pensions. This was only a part, and not the most important part, of what Clemenceau understood by reparations.

The most important part was the coal basin of the Saar. In the war, Germany had destroyed the coal-mines of the North of France. France demanded the Saar coal basin as compensation. France needed coke. Coke could not be got from the Saar coal. But the French experts declared that they could make the Saar Territory produce it. The historical experts also remembered that the Saar had once been French territory. Accordingly, France demanded the restoration of this territory, with the frontiers of 1814. If only as the birthplace of a French hero—Marshal Ney of Sarrelouis—the Saar Territory was precious French soil.

Armament demands, fabulous reparation sums, and above all the proposal to annex the Saar—all this was in conflict with Woodrow Wilson's programme, with Woodrow Wilson's ethics, in conflict with the idea of the League of Nations and its corollary of peace with justice. There

could be no escape from the great storm, for the French spoke openly of peace terms on these lines as the absolute minimum. And they spoke of them now every day.

Marshal Foch raised on March 17th the question of the Rhine. On this day the *generalissimo* was breathing fire all round. Galicia was aflame, and the red flare was a heavy disaster for France and for almost half of Central Europe, for the Ukrainians were setting siege to Polish Lemberg. The marshal saw the new Poland in danger while it was yet in the making. It was France's duty to stand by her protégé. General Haller's army ought to be sent without a moment's delay via Vienna to the relief of Lemberg.

Thus the Rhenish and Polish questions had both been opened up, though the *generalissimo's* battle-cry was frowned on and General Haller remained without marching orders. But the French Premier echoed the cry of a "strong Poland," adding one more to the discordant voices. It appeared that the President of the United States had little objection to offer to a widening of Poland's borders. He was well inclined towards the Poles, having had favourable reports from his adviser, Professor Lord, whom he had sent to Poland. He was willing to hand over Danzig to the new State. But he was not to be persuaded to allow it any heavy armaments. The French Prime Minister was determined to add, not only to Poland's territory, but to her armaments also. Before the difference of view could be composed the British Prime Minister intervened. He had various points to raise with regard to Professor Lord's report. There was a good deal in it which appeared to be open to criticism. Lloyd George had no interest in a "strong Poland." He refused to agree to the cession to her of Danzig. A complete breach had come. No settlement of the Polish question came into view.

The breach was not narrowed but widened when discussion turned to the "strategic Rhine frontier" and to

the question of armaments. The French Prime Minister, and with him Marshal Foch and André Tardieu, demanded permanent military control and the creation of an autonomous State on the left bank of the Rhine, on the lines of the Polish "Eastern buffer State." As to this second demand, the President of the United States seemed to be undecided. Military control to all eternity he rejected. Control was justifiable for the supervision of Germany's disarming. But he would not agree to permanent encroachments on German sovereignty after the conclusion of peace. He was entirely against disarmament for Germany alone. He was for universal disarmament :

"If the Allied armies were to be maintained for ever, in order to control the carrying out of the Peace Terms, not peace, but Allied armed domination, would have been established."

The French Prime Minister made no secret at all of the fact that he was entirely in favour of "Allied armed domination." But before this further difference of view could be composed the British Prime Minister intervened once more. Lloyd George was himself in favour of disarmament. But he would never agree to the Rhineland being torn away from Germany. He was entirely against actual German territory being taken away from the Germans anywhere.

Beside himself with irritation, the French Prime Minister left the sitting. He was unable to tell who was his actual opponent. Sometimes it seemed to be the President of the United States, sometimes the British Prime Minister. But both would find themselves mistaken if they really supposed that he would capitulate.

Far from it : he would strike back. It should not be said for nothing that he was a master of the short and sharp way. He was sick of that mulish ideologue Wilson. He would heave at his head something that would make it

hum. He would have a word with him about Turkey and let him just hear what was going to happen there. The British Prime Minister, with his grave reminders of treaties with a good long past, his suggestions that this was not quite the time, his concern for the aspirations of the Dominions for colonies of their own, might find Clemenceau's new line awkward ; but the French Premier was not going to be put off for another moment. He was decidedly irritated just then with Lloyd George too, after the bother about the " strategic Rhine frontier," Poland, and Danzig. He told him briefly what the meeting he had decided on was to be about. He told the President nothing, but, as Chairman of the Peace Conference, invited him to the British Premier's residence in the Rue Nitot.

There he asked M. Pichon, the Foreign Minister, to open the discussion. The Sykes-Picot Treaty, concluded between Great Britain and France in 1916, required, said Pichon, the approval of the Conference. Lloyd George also, like Clemenceau, had brought his Foreign Secretary. Also two generals. Orlando, the Italian Prime Minister, was accompanied by Baron Sonnino. At once, without any preliminaries, any apology, any beating about the bush, this casually and arbitrarily summoned afternoon conference was brought to its task : the carrying out of the arrangements for the partition of the Turkish Empire.

The President of the United States was speechless. He had heard nothing of any agreements of this nature—agreements that allocated, without further ado, Syria to the French, Mesopotamia to the British, and assigned tasks to the two Powers in Arabia on which they had long ago agreed between themselves. Italy, apparently, was in some way concerned in the deal. For Italy's representatives had certainly not come for nothing to the secret sitting.

The President had long ago realized that from the time when the Conference first met his whole work, all his plans

and lofty moral ideas, had been menaced and obstructed by things seen darkly, of which he knew nothing or not enough, things that never ventured into the light, or, if they did, retired again into obscurity the moment that anyone mentioned them or tried to get definite knowledge of them. There were inscrutable intrigues against everything involved in his fundamental principle of reconciliation and harmony between the nations. But this new matter sprung on him, these demands put forward and discussed as though there was nothing whatever out of the way about them, were proposals for nothing less than deliberate and unashamed land-grabbing, a direct negation of the League of Nations proposals, an open mockery of them. The President of the United States refused to listen to them. There was no possibility of a New World Order along those lines. He had, of course, no desire or power to interfere in private and incidental discussions between Great Powers. But if they had reference to matters which were the business of the Conference, matters which it was for the Conference to decide, which involved its fundamental principles, then, when he was asked for his personal view and decision, he could only say that it was dictated to him in advance by his own principles, by the League of Nations idea. Experts must first be sent to Turkey in Asia, as had been decided for other mandated territories. It was a matter of principle with him that first of all the "facts" must be established. Only after that had been done could the question come up of the allocation of particular mandates for the Turkish provinces. No one could yet say whether the Syrians wanted to have the French, or the Mesopotamians the British.

Lloyd George and Clemenceau saw that the President was still his old self. Here again, to all appearance, he intended to obstruct the progress of any real business. For the time being they got no farther. They had, after

all, merely raised the matter. It was not one which could be settled off-hand, and nothing whatever was yet decided. They had merely opened their campaign, and would have to decide on their tactics. An investigation by experts could be arranged. That committed no one. In any case, however, the French Prime Minister demanded in connexion with the ascertainment of the facts " certain guarantees." He considered that " the whole enquiry would be an extraordinarily delicate matter." Lloyd George had suddenly become the most accommodating of negotiators. He did not betray the smallest sign of disappointment. He merely remarked, quite casually :[1]

" If by any chance the evidence obtained should prove so overwhelming as to drive the British Empire out of Mesopotamia, they [the British] would, of course, be free to consider whether they could undertake a mandate elsewhere in Turkey."

The sitting was at an end. Polite, correct form had been preserved. The French Prime Minister had not stormed. Lloyd George had remained ingratiating. Not one hot word had been spoken. But it was the icy politeness of irreconcilable disagreement. Totally opposed conceptions of the world had emerged to face one another. This time the irritation was concealed with the best of grace. Completely upset and visibly disgusted, the President of the United States left the Rue Nitot.

There was no denying that from this moment the leaders of the five Great Powers were openly in conflict over their tasks. Their views were sharply opposed, whether their discussions were polite or not. The conflict began to invade the Press. For three days its details reappeared in the papers with every sort of embellishment. During the afternoon discussion in the Rue Nitot, Lloyd George had not allowed the temporary set-back to his Turkish settlement

[1] Retranslated.

to disturb his courteous equanimity. But next day, in the " Council of Ten," he was too annoyed for courtesy, and denounced with the utmost exasperation the muddled and misleading half-truths which the newspapers had published about his views and intentions in regard to Danzig and the alleged storm over them. The experience from which the President of the United States had suffered just six weeks before now came to Lloyd George himself, but, unlike the President, he gave full vent to his annoyance. In the " Council of Ten " his complaint was vigorous and outspoken. " Such incidents must be put a stop to." He took the opportunity at once to make the position clear. It was just as well to let it be realized every now and then how much power he had at his back :

" If this sort of thing goes on I shall go back. I cannot do business in this way."

The " Council of Ten " was filled for days with disagreements and readiness to take offence, even with uproar. The caustic, vicious, wordy warfare, into which Clemenceau, still ailing, constantly broke with his loud, barking cough, the whole disordered scene, the degradation of the tribunal, was too much for Lloyd George. It was impossible for the settlement of the terms of peace to be left any longer to the " Council of Ten." There had for some time been no real debate there ; there had merely been nagging. The President of the United States spoke always with restrained, regretful condescension ; the French Prime Minister in savage, malevolent, stinging phrases which Lloyd George, sensitive and excitable, returned to the full. It was clear to all three of them that the bickering was going to go on. That it was anything but edifying for the " Council of Ten," Lloyd George was not alone in thinking. He gave it, therefore, as his opinion that the agenda of the " Council of Ten " was much too heavy. To the Premiers and Foreign Ministers assembled he declared : " This is much too much ! "

He suggested that it would be much better if in future two Commissions sat, in separate rooms. He arranged that from then on the Foreign Ministers should meet apart from the " Big Four," under Lord Curzon's chairmanship.

Lord Curzon bade farewell to the Prime Ministers. He looked at his agenda sheet :

" There is nothing at all for us to do ! "

" Didn't you realize," answered the Italian representative, Signor Scialoja, " that this move is just to get us out of the other room ? "

From then on the " Big Four " met secretly and alone. It was the most radical change hitherto made in the organization of the Conference, and once more many tongues wagged in Conference circles and in editorial offices. The " Council of Ten " continued to exist. But it seldom met again around Pichon's big desk. The new " Council of Foreign Ministers," the " Council of the Little Five," had suddenly been born of the overloaded agenda paper which Lloyd George had discovered. The " Big Four," now the chief committee, segregated as the supreme and final arbiters, left the Quai d'Orsay altogether. They found a more secluded rendezvous for their altercations, entirely among themselves, in Lloyd George's comfortable residence in the Rue Nitot. Still more often they sat in the tasteful, quiet library in President Wilson's house, round the fire in big fauteuils, often without even their secretaries. Sometimes, when matters were to be discussed in which he had any interest, the Japanese delegate joined them round the fire. In these confidential, hermetical sittings the discussion went on regularly from 10 or 11 a.m. By noon there would be general readiness for a move. If the necessity arose, experts would be sent for or instructed to attend. In the ante-room orderly officers were in waiting to answer questions, take instructions, or do anything needed. In a big room on the first floor the experts were in waiting.

Sometimes Wilson or Lloyd George, anxious for information at once on some recondite matter which might support his contention, would send up a scribbled pencil note :

" Czechoslovak—

" What is that ? Where is it ? How many are there ? "

Then the officer would hurry away. In front of the fire the problems went on crackling and exploding, igniting one another, flaming and shooting up, until the raging wind carried them right across the sky above the Conference.

The President of the United States had tried, so far as he was concerned, to get away from all his disgust, his supreme dissatisfaction, back to the purer air of his League of Nations ideas. Tirelessly, whenever he was able to get a moment free from the French deals and demands now being busily pressed forward, he revolved his plans for safeguarding at least this " integral part " of the world peace, especially against the obstacles and perils that threatened it from America herself, although the Conference had already accepted it.

The Covenant of the League of Nations could not remain as it had finally emerged after the long struggle over it. The President realized that some word, a note or clause recognizing the Monroe Doctrine, had to be incorporated —to meet American insistence. But if he tried to get a clause of this nature added to the draft he would probably meet with opposition from France. His intention had been to offer the League to the French as an element of security, as a guaranteed rally of all members against any future aggression, especially against the German war of revenge so feared. But, even in the form in which they had accepted it, the French found in the League of Nations no satisfactory, adequate " security." They demanded protection for the future by means of more concrete provisions and promises. If the President of the United States asked for the

inclusion of a clause on the Monroe Doctrine, the French would point out that it was precisely the Monroe Doctrine which forbade any American intervention beyond American shores, any despatch of American troops to the aid of a friendly power in Europe. The concession which he must have if he was to gain the Senate's acceptance of the League of Nations, France refused him. That meant rejecting the League of Nations altogether. And the demand which France made of him would wreck his work at home. Painfully, with the same laborious process of compilation out of which the Covenant of the League of Nations itself had gradually crystallized, he elaborated out of the proposals which had reached him from America the draft of yet another clause :

" Nothing in this Covenant shall be deemed to affect or deny the right of any American State or States to protect the integrity of American territory and the independence of any American Government whose territory is threatened, whether a member of the League or not, or in the interest of American peace, to object to or prevent the further transfer of American territory or sovereignty to any power outside the Western Hemisphere."

Yet, if he was to be honest with himself, he had to admit at once that this draft clause would fail substantially to satisfy either France or America. The President's addendum, bringing in the Monroe Doctrine, would prevent the intervention of foreign Powers in America. The sentence incorporated was of real importance to his country and of very little to France. The absence of a sentence referring to American non-intervention in Europe was an important matter for France, but America could and might reject the arrangement thus made. For it would leave her committed after all. It was perfectly true, as the President repeated to himself, to his American friends, and especially to every Frenchman who would listen to him, that there was no

conflict whatever between the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Monroe Doctrine. But the incompleteness of the draft still remained. He had saved for the Americans that part of the Monroe Doctrine which protected the Union ; perhaps they would rest content with this half of it. On the other half, in the interest of the French, he had been silent. Perhaps the French would rest content with that. It was hardly likely that the Americans would. Unless they failed to notice the omission which left them committed to Europe.

Painfully the President laboured. He would go cautiously with his drafts, take no risk of spoiling them by haste. But in these labours, which he continued to regard as of importance above all else, he was not only disturbed by the discontent, the disappointment, the dissension around him ; the cablegrams continued to bombard him from America. His secretary Tumulty reported :

> " There is great danger to you in the present situation. I can see signs that our enemies here and abroad would try to make it appear that you are responsible for delay in peace settlement and that delay has increased momentum of bolshevism and anarchy in Hungary and Balkans. Can responsibility for delay be fixed by you in some way? "

There was need for haste ; the President knew it. The world was indeed in ferment. Peace must come quickly, as quickly as possible, if only because Marshal Foch and the French generals were still wedded to thoughts of war, wanted to fight now around Lemberg, now at the gates of Moscow, were at work engineering war between Hungary and Roumania or anywhere else they could manage, on their own initiative, without their Government's sanction, behind their Government's back. But even now the President would do nothing precipitately. He was still convinced that the only guarantee of a new world with a

different mentality, a world at peace, was the League of Nations. He gave instructions that the disturbed state of feeling in America should be calmed by declarations that no preventible delay was being allowed. Everything of importance affecting the details of the peace, everything needed to facilitate the ultimate treaties and final liquidation of the war, was being worked upon with care and with the utmost speed, entirely apart from, and independently of, the negotiations concerning the League of Nations. None of the many other complicated peace problems was being neglected.

What he said was true. He had himself to lay aside once more his formulæ for the addendum to the League of Nations draft. For there were now " other " peace problems every day, every hour. And they were so greatly " complicated " that they threatened to swamp and overwhelm him.

The British Prime Minister had sought the quiet of Fontainebleau over the week-end. Far from Paris, far from the heated atmosphere which seemed now to have become permanent in the assemblies there, he thought out the farthest limits to which he could go to meet his ally Clemenceau in order to ensure that France and Britain should continue to live in friendship ; and much else. In Fontainebleau his thoughts went beyond the difficulties of the moment, by which ordinarily his whole policy was swayed. He wrote out his " Fontainebleau Document." So far as it was possible to cover in a short statement the whole field of the essential elements of a peace, he proposed to draw up a sort of programme which should safeguard from fresh wars for a generation to come the peace so hardly won. He formulated *Some Considerations for the Peace Conference before they finally draft their Terms.*[1] He sent the memorandum to the President of the United States and to the French Prime Minister, Clemenceau.

[1] Cmd. 1614 (1922).

SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PEACE CONFERENCE BEFORE THEY FINALLY DRAFT THEIR TERMS

I

When nations are exhausted by wars in which they have put forth all their strength and which leave them tired, bleeding and broken, it is not difficult to patch up a peace that may last until the generation which experienced the horrors of the war has passed away. Pictures of heroism and triumph only tempt those who know nothing of the sufferings and terrors of war. It is therefore comparatively easy to patch up a peace which will last for thirty years.

What is difficult, however, is to draw up a peace which will not provoke a fresh struggle when those who have had practical experience of what war means have passed away. History has proved that a peace, which has been hailed by a victorious nation as a triumph of diplomatic skill and statesmanship, even of moderation in the long run, has proved itself to be shortsighted and charged with danger to the victor. The peace of 1871 was believed by Germany to ensure not only her security but her permanent supremacy. The facts have shown exactly the contrary. France itself has demonstrated that those who say you can make Germany so feeble that she will never be able to hit back are utterly wrong. Year by year France became numerically weaker in comparison with her victorious neighbour, but in reality she became ever more powerful. She kept watch on Europe ; she made alliance with those whom Germany had wronged or menaced ; she never ceased to warn the world of its danger and ultimately she was able to secure the overthrow of the far mightier power which had trampled so brutally upon her. You may strip Germany of her colonies, reduce her armaments to a mere police

force and her navy to that of a fifth-rate power ; all the same in the end if she feels that she has been unjustly treated in the peace of 1919 she will find means of exacting retribution from her conquerors. The impression, the deep impression, made upon the human heart by four years of unexampled slaughter will disappear with the hearts upon which it has been marked by the terrible sword of the great war. The maintenance of peace will then depend upon there being no causes of exasperation constantly stirring up the spirit of patriotism, of justice or of fair play. To achieve redress our terms may be severe, they may be stern and even ruthless, but at the same time they can be so just that the country on which they are imposed will feel in its heart that it has no right to complain. But injustice, arrogance, displayed in the hour of triumph, will never be forgotten or forgiven.

For these reasons I am, therefore, strongly averse to transferring more Germans from German rule to the rule of some other nation that can possibly be helped. I cannot conceive any greater cause of future war than that the German people, who have certainly proved themselves one of the most vigorous and powerful races in the world, should be surrounded by a number of small States, many of them consisting of people who have never previously set up a stable government for themselves, but each of them containing large masses of Germans clamouring for reunion with their native land. The proposal of the Polish Commission that we should place 2,100,000 Germans under the control of a people which is of a different religion and which has never proved its capacity for stable self-government throughout its history must, in my judgment, lead sooner or later to a new war in the East of Europe. What I have said about the Germans is equally true of the Magyars. There will never be peace in South Eastern Europe if every little state now coming into being is to have a large Magyar Irredenta within its borders.

I would therefore take as a guiding principle of the peace that as far as is humanly possible the different races should be allocated to their motherlands, and that this human criterion should have precedence over considerations of strategy or economics or communications, which can usually be adjusted by other means. Secondly, I would say that the duration for the payments of reparation ought to disappear if possible with the generation which made the war.

But there is a consideration in favour of a long-sighted peace which influences me even more than the desire to leave no causes justifying a fresh outbreak thirty years hence. There is one element in the present condition of nations which differentiates it from the situation as it was in 1815. In the Napoleonic war the countries were equally exhausted, but the revolutionary spirit had spent its force in the country of its birth, and Germany had satisfied the legitimate popular demands for the time being by a series of economic changes which were inspired by courage, foresight and high statesmanship. Even in Russia the Czar had effected great reforms which were probably at that time even too advanced for the half savage population. The situation is very different now. The revolution is still in its infancy. The extreme figures of the Terror are still in command in Russia. The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of revolution. There is a deep sense not only of discontent, but of anger and revolt, amongst the workmen against pre-war conditions. The whole existing order in its political, social and economic aspects is questioned by the masses of the population from one end of Europe to the other. In some countries, like Germany and Russia, the unrest takes the form of open rebellion ; in others, like France, Great Britain and Italy, it takes the shape of strikes and of general disinclination to settle down to work—symptoms which are just as much concerned with the desire for political and social change as with wage demands.

Much of this unrest is healthy. We shall never make a lasting peace by attempting to restore the conditions of 1914. But there is a danger that we may throw the masses of the population throughout Europe into the arms of the extremists whose only idea for regenerating mankind is to destroy utterly the whole existing fabric of society. These men have triumphed in Russia. They have done so at a terrible price. Hundreds of thousands of the population have perished. The railways, the roads, the towns, the whole structural organization of Russia has been almost destroyed, but somehow or other they seem to have managed to keep their hold upon the masses of the Russian people, and what is much more significant, they have succeeded in creating a large army which is apparently well directed and well disciplined, and is, as to a great part of it, prepared to die for its ideals. In another year Russia, inspired by a new enthusiasm, may have recovered from her passion for peace and have at her command the only army eager to fight, because it is the only army that believes that it has any cause to fight for.

The greatest danger that I see in the present situation is that Germany may throw in her lot with Bolshevism and place her resources, her brains, her vast organizing power at the disposal of the revolutionary fanatics whose dream it is to conquer the world for Bolshevism by force of arms. This danger is no mere chimera. The present Government in Germany is weak ; it has no prestige ; its authority is challenged ; it lingers merely because there is no alternative but the spartacists, and Germany is not ready for spartacism as yet. But the argument which the spartacists are using with great effect at this very time is that they alone can save Germany from the intolerable conditions which have been bequeathed her by the war. They offer to free the German people from indebtedness to the Allies and indebtedness to their own richer classes. They offer them

complete control of their own affairs and the prospect of a new heaven and earth. It is true that the price will be heavy. There will be two or three years of anarchy, perhaps of bloodshed, but at the end the land will remain, the people will remain, the greater part of the houses and the factories will remain, and the railways and the roads will remain, and Germany, having thrown off her burdens, will be able to make a fresh start.

If Germany goes over to the spartacists it is inevitable that she should throw in her lot with the Russian Bolshevists. Once that happens all Eastern Europe will be swept into the orbit of the Bolshevik revolution and within a year we may witness the spectacle of nearly three hundred million people organized into a vast red army under German instructors and German generals equipped with German cannon and German machine guns and prepared for a renewal of the attack on Western Europe. This is a prospect which no one can face with equanimity. Yet the news which came from Hungary yesterday shows only too clearly that this danger is no fantasy. And what are the reasons alleged for this decision? They are mainly the belief that large numbers of Magyars are to be handed over to the control of others. If we are wise, we shall offer to Germany a peace, which, while just, will be preferable for all sensible men to the alternative of Bolshevism. I would, therefore, put it in the forefront of the peace that once she accepts our terms, especially reparation, we will open to her the raw materials and markets of the world on equal terms with ourselves, and will do everything possible to enable the German people to get upon their legs again. We cannot both cripple her and expect her to pay.

Finally, we must offer terms which a responsible Government in Germany can expect to be able to carry out. If we present terms to Germany which are unjust, or excessively onerous, no responsible Government will sign them;

certainly the present weak administration will not. If it did, I am told that it would be swept away within twenty-four hours. Yet if we can find nobody in Germany who will put his hand to a peace treaty, what will be the position? A large army of occupation for an indefinite period is out of the question. Germany would not mind it. A very large number of people in that country would welcome it as it would be the only hope of preserving the existing order of things. The objection would not come from Germany, but from our own countries. Neither the British Empire nor America would agree to occupy Germany. France by itself could not bear the burden of occupation. We should therefore be driven back on the policy of blockading the country. That would inevitably mean spartacism from the Urals to the Rhine, with its inevitable consequence of a huge red army attempting to cross the Rhine. As a matter of fact I am doubtful whether public opinion would allow us deliberately to starve Germany. If the only difference between Germany and ourselves were between onerous terms and moderate terms, I very much doubt if public opinion would tolerate the deliberate condemnation of millions of women and children to death by starvation. If so, the Allies would have incurred the moral defeat of having attempted to impose terms on Germany which Germany had successfully resisted.

From every point of view, therefore, it seems to me that we ought to endeavour to draw up a peace settlement as if we were impartial arbiters, forgetful of the passions of the war. This settlement ought to have three ends in view. First of all it must do justice to the Allies by taking into account Germany's responsibility for the origin of the war and for the way in which it was fought. Secondly, it must be a settlement which a responsible German Government can sign in the belief that it can fulfil the obligations it incurs. Thirdly, it must be a settlement which will contain

in itself no provocations for future wars, and which will constitute an alternative to Bolshevism, because it will commend itself to all reasonable opinion as a fair settlement of the European problem.

II

It is not, however, enough to draw up a just and far-sighted peace with Germany. If we are to offer Europe an alternative to Bolshevism we must make the League of Nations into something which will be both a safeguard to those nations who are prepared for fair dealing with their neighbours and a menace to those who would trespass on the rights of their neighbours, whether they are imperialist empires or imperialist Bolshevists. An essential element, therefore, in the peace settlement is the constitution of the League of Nations as the effective guardian of international right and international liberty throughout the world. If this is to happen the first thing to do is that the leading members of the League of Nations should arrive at an understanding between themselves in regard to armaments. To my mind it is idle to endeavour to impose a permanent limitation of armaments upon Germany unless we are prepared similarly to impose a limitation upon ourselves. I recognize that until Germany has settled down and given practical proof that she has abandoned her imperialist ambitions, and until Russia has also given proof that she does not intend to embark upon a military crusade against her neighbours, it is essential that the leading members of the League of Nations should maintain considerable forces both by land and sea in order to preserve liberty in the world. But if they are to present an united front to the forces both of reaction and revolution, they must arrive at such an agreement in regard to armaments among themselves as would make it impossible for suspicion to arise

between the members of the League of Nations in regard to their intentions towards one another. If the League is to do its work for the world it will only be because the members of the League trust it themselves and because there are no rivalries and jealousies in the matter of armaments between them. The first condition of success for the League of Nations is, therefore, a firm understanding between the British Empire and the United States of America and France and Italy that there will be no competitive building up of fleets or armies between them. Unless this is arrived at before the Covenant is signed the League of Nations will be a sham and a mockery. It will be regarded, and rightly regarded, as a proof that its principal promoters and patrons repose no confidence in its efficacy. But once the leading members of the League have made it clear that they have reached an understanding which will both secure to the League of Nations the strength which is necessary to enable it to protect its members and which at the same time will make misunderstanding and suspicion with regard to competitive armament impossible between them its future and its authority will be ensured. It will then be able to ensure as an essential condition of peace that not only Germany but all the smaller States of Europe undertake to limit their armaments and abolish conscription. If the small nations are permitted to organize and maintain conscript armies running each to hundreds of thousands, boundary wars will be inevitable and all Europe will be drawn in. Unless we secure this universal limitation we shall achieve neither lasting peace, nor the permanent observance of the limitation of German armaments which we now seek to impose.

I should like to ask why Germany, if she accepts the terms we consider just and fair, should not be admitted to the League of Nations, at any rate as soon as she has established a stable and democratic Government. Would it not

be an inducement to her both to sign the terms and to resist Bolshevism ? Might it not be safer that she should be inside the League than that she should be outside it ?

Finally, I believe that until the authority and effectiveness of the League of Nations has been demonstrated, the British Empire and the United States ought to give to France a guarantee against the possibility of a new German aggression. France has special reason for asking for such a guarantee. She has twice been attacked and twice invaded by Germany in half a century. She has been so attacked because she has been the principal guardian of liberal and democratic civilization against Central European autocracy on the Continent of Europe. It is right that the other great Western democracies should enter into an undertaking which will ensure that they stand by her side in time to protect her against invasion, should Germany ever threaten her again or until the League of Nations has proved its capacity to preserve the peace and liberty of the world.

III

If, however, the Peace Conference is really to secure peace and prove to the world a complete plan of settlement which all reasonable men will recognize as an alternative preferable to anarchy, it must deal with the Russian situation. Bolshevik imperialism does not merely menace the States on Russia's borders. It threatens the whole of Asia and is as near to America as it is to France. It is idle to think that the Peace Conference can separate, however sound a peace it may have arranged with Germany, if it leaves Russia as it is to-day. I do not propose, however, to complicate the question of the peace with Germany by introducing a discussion of the Russian problem. I mention it simply in order to remind ourselves of the importance of dealing with it as soon as possible.

OUTLINE OF PEACE TERMS

Part I

Termination of State of War

War, i.e. the state of belligerency, cannot be brought to an end more than once. If the forthcoming treaty is to enable the transition of the Allied countries to a peace footing to be carried through, and demobilization to be completed, it should put an end to the state of war.

Part II

The League of Nations

(1) All high contracting parties, as part of the Treaty of Peace, to become members of the League of Nations, the Covenant of which will be signed as a separate Treaty by those Powers that are admitted, subject to acceptance of the following conditions :

(i) An agreement between the principal members of the League of Nations in regard to armaments which will put an end to competition between them.

(ii) The lesser members of the League of Nations to accept the limitation of armaments and the abolition of conscription.

(iii) An agreement to be made between all members of the League of Nations for the purpose of securing equal and improved conditions of labour in their respective countries.

Part III—Political

A. *Cession of territory by Germany and the consequential arrangements*

Eastern Boundaries of Germany

(1) Poland to be given a corridor to Danzig, but this to be drawn irrespective of strategic or tranportation considerations so as to embrace the smallest possible number of Germans.

(2) Rectification of Bohemian frontier. (Still to be decided after hearing Report of Czecho-Slovak Commission.)

Western Boundaries of Germany

(3) No attempt is made to separate the Rhenish Provinces from the rest of Germany. These Provinces to be demilitarized; that is to say, the inhabitants of this territory will not be permitted to bear arms or receive any military training, or to be incorporated in any military organization either on a voluntary or compulsory basis, and no fortifications, depots, establishments, railway construction, or works of any kind adapted to military purposes will be permitted to exist within the area. No troops to be sent into this area for any purpose whatsoever without previous notification to the League of Nations. As France is naturally anxious about a neighbour who has twice within living memory invaded and devastated her land with surprising rapidity, the British Empire and the United States of America undertake to come to the assistance of France with their whole strength in the event of Germany moving her troops across the Rhine without the consent of the Council of the League of Nations. This guarantee to last until the League of Nations has proved itself to be an adequate security.

(4) Germany to cede Alsace-Lorraine to France.

(5) Germany to cede to France the 1814 frontier, or, in the alternative, in order to compensate France for the destruction of her coal-fields, the present Alsace-Lorraine frontier with the use of the coal-mines in the Saar Valley for a period of 10 years. Germany to undertake, after the expiration of 10 years, to put no obstacle on the export of the produce of these coal-mines to France.

(6) Abrogation of Customs Union with Luxemburg and other Luxemburg questions. (Still to be decided.)

(7) Germany to cede to Belgium Malmedy and Moresnet.

(8) Heligoland and Dune. (Still to be decided.)

NORTHERN BOUNDARIES OF GERMANY

(9) Germany to cede certain portions of Schleswig to Denmark as provided by Danish Commission.

GERMAN OVERSEA POSSESSIONS AND RIGHTS

(10) Germany to cede all rights in the ex-German colonies and in the leased territory of Kiauchow.

B. *Recognition of New States which receive no German territory*

C. *Russian Section*

(1) Germany to renounce all rights under Brest-Litovsk Treaty.

(2) Germany to renounce all rights under Treaty of Bucarest.

(3) Germany to renounce all arrangements by Allied and Associated Governments with reference to previous Russian territory, including special arrangements with new States.

D. *Turkish Section*

(1) Germany to recognize the cession by Turkey of the whole of her territory to mandatories responsible to the League of Nations. As far as Germany is concerned, mandates to be settled by the Allied and Associated Powers.

Note.—Included in the Turkish Section also will be a number of provisions arising out of the Report of the Financial Commission, the Commission on the Breaches of the Laws of War, e.g. the surrender of Turks hiding in Germany, with their property, as well as an undertaking by Germany to be bound by terms of the treaty of peace with Turkey and a recognition of the British Protectorate over Egypt with renunciation of extraterritorial privileges and recognition of transfer to His Majesty's Government of the Sultan's rights under the Suez Canal Convention.

E. *Miscellaneous*

(1) Acceptance by Germany of Arms Convention.

(2) Waiver of rights under Berlin and Brussels Acts and acceptance, if desired, of new instrument to replace them.

MR. LLOYD GEORGE LEAVING THE TRIANON PALACE AFTER THE SITTING OF MAY 7, 1919

(3) Acceptance of new régime replacing Treaty of 1839 as to Belgium.

(Otherwise the claims of Belgium against Holland to be disregarded.)

(4) Opening of Kiel Canal to ships of all nations.

(5) Special arrangements for control of Rhine, Oder, Vistula, Niemen, Elbe.

(6) Rhine-Danube Canal.

(7) St. Gotthard Railway.

(8) Acceptance of new arrangements as to European Commission of Danube.

(9) Other political multilateral treaties ; acceptance of abrogation (if so desired by Allies).

(10) Waiver of all *pre-war* claims against Allied and Associated Powers on behalf of either Governments or individuals.

(11) Acceptance of all Allied Prize Court decisions and orders.

Part IV

Reduction of Armaments

Preamble explaining that the disarmament of Germany is the first step in the limitation of the armaments of all nations.

(*a*) Military terms
(*b*) Naval terms } as already agreed on.
(*c*) Air terms
(*d*) Questions as to restoration of prisoners of war and interned persons.
(*e*) Waiver by Germany of all claims on behalf of prisoners of war and interned persons.

Part V

Reparation

(1) Germany to undertake to pay full reparation to the Allies. It is difficult to assess the amount chargeable against

Germany under this head. It certainly greatly exceeds what, on any calculation, Germany is capable of paying. It is therefore suggested that Germany should pay an annual sum for a stated number of years. This sum to be agreed among the Allied and Associated Powers. Germany to be allowed a number of years within which to work up to payment of the full annual amount.

It has been suggested that a Permanent Commission should be set up to which Germany should be able to appeal for permission to postpone some portion of the annual payment for adequate reasons shown. This Commission would be entitled to cancel the payment of interest on postponed payments during the first few years. The amount received from Germany to be distributed in the following proportions :

50 per cent. to France ;
30 per cent. to the British Empire ;
20 per cent. to other nations.

Part of the German payments to be used to liquidate debts owed by the Allies to one another.

(2) Return of relics, &c., taken by the Turks from Medina and handed over to Germany.

(3) Return of objects of native veneration removed from German East Africa.

Part VI

Breaches of the Laws of War

(1) Demand and surrender of the Kaiser and all individuals responsible for the War, and also of all individuals responsible for inhuman breaches of the laws of war.

(2) Creation of Court.

(3) Jurisdiction and procedure.

(4) Punishment of offenders.

Part VII

Economic

Germany to be given full access to raw materials and markets of the world on the same terms as Allies directly she signs the peace. The Allied and Associated Powers to do all they can to put her upon her legs once more. In addition we await the report of Economic and Financial Commissions but will include the following :—

(1) Settlement of pre-war private debts ; scheme of a clearing house.
(2) Regulation of pre-war contracts between Allied and enemy individuals.
(3) Settlement of claims arising out of businesses, &c., liquidated, sold, &c.
(4) Revival of Economic Treaties.
(5) Provision as to Industrial Property (Patents, Trade-marks, &c.).
(6) Provisions as to Freedom of Transit.
(7) Provisions as to international use of railways, ports, and waterways, if of general application.
(8) Acceptance of the draft commercial clauses. (Economic Section's draft A of March 6, 1919.)
(9) Enforcement of Customs Control (if necessary).
(10) Undertaking to ratify and enforce the Opium Convention.

Paris.
March 25, 1919.

Clemenceau read the memorandum—full of hostility, in dogged opposition to every proposal, with no real will to acknowledge in the slightest the fact that Britain was trying in this document to help France forward. He read the document with a completely blind eye to every concession to which Lloyd George undertook to agree and to the real readiness to assist which he evinced. He showed

only a biting contempt for the effort made to achieve, through a modicum of reasonableness towards the vanquished, the very security which Clemenceau made his one theme day after day. Lloyd George sought to achieve that security by warnings against driving the beaten foe to the extremes of despair and embitterment. Clemenceau found its only guarantee in armed defence, in permanently holding down the enemy. His " best man," Tardieu, the standard-bearer, creator, and merciless defender of the whole French peace programme, drafted a reply to the " Fontainebleau Document." The French Prime Minister found it insufficiently comprehensive. Three days after the receipt of Lloyd George's memorandum he replied himself[1] :

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S NOTE OF MARCH 26.

1. The French Government is in complete accord with the general purpose of Mr. Lloyd George's note : that is to say, to make a durable and consequently a just peace.

It does not believe, on the other hand, that the principle which it shares, really leads to the conclusions drawn by the note in question.

2. The note suggests that moderate territorial conditions should be imposed upon Germany in Europe in order not to leave a profound feeling of resentment after peace.

This method might have value, if the late war had been for Germany a European war. This, however, was not the case. Before the war Germany was a great naval power whose future lay upon the water. This world power was Germany's pride ; she will not console herself for having lost it.

But, without being deterred by the fear of such resentment, all of her colonies, her entire navy, a great part of

[1] Text of reply taken from Vol. III., pp. 249 *sqq.*, of Ray Stannard Baker's *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement.*

her commercial fleet (as a form of reparation), and her foreign markets over which she held sway, have been taken from her, or will be taken from her. Thus the blow which she will feel the most is dealt her, and people think that she can be appeased by a certain amelioration of territorial conditions. This is a pure illusion, and the remedy is not proportionate to the evil.

If a means of satisfying Germany is sought, it should not be sought in Germany. This kind of conciliation will be idle, in case Germany is severed from her world policy. If it is necessary to appease her she should be offered colonial satisfaction, naval satisfaction, or satisfaction with regard to her commercial expansion. The note of the 26th of March, however, only takes into account European territorial satisfaction.

3. The note of Mr. Lloyd George fears that too severe territorial conditions will be playing the game of Bolshevism in Germany. Is it not to be feared that the method suggested will have precisely this result?

The conference has decided to call to life a certain number of new States. Can the Conference, without committing an injustice, sacrifice them, out of consideration for Germany, by imposing upon them inacceptable frontiers?

If these peoples, especially Poland and Bohemia, have been able to resist Bolshevism up to now, it is because of a sense of nationality. If violence is done to this sentiment, Bolshevism will find these two peoples an easy prey, and the only barrier which at the present moment exists between Russian Bolshevism and German Bolshevism will be shattered.

The result will be either a confederation of Eastern and Central Europe under the domination of a Bolshevist Germany, or the enslavement of the same countries by a reactionary Germany, thanks to the general anarchy. In both cases, the Allies will have lost the war. On the contrary, the policy of the French Government is resolutely

to aid these young peoples with the support of the liberal elements in Europe, and not to seek, at their expense, ineffectual attenuations of the colonial, naval, and commercial disaster inflicted upon Germany by the Peace. If one is obliged, in giving to these young peoples frontiers without which they cannot live, to transfer to the sovereignty the sons of the very Germans who have enslaved them, it is to be regretted and it must be done with moderation, but it cannot be avoided.

Moreover, while one deprives Germany totally and definitely of her colonies, because she maltreated the indigenous population, by what right can one refuse to give Poland and Bohemia normal frontiers because the Germans have installed themselves upon Polish and Bohemian soil as guarantors of oppressive pan-Germanism?

4. Mr. Lloyd George's note insists—and the French Government is in agreement—upon the necessity of making a peace which shall seem to Germany to be a just peace. But, in view of German mentality, it is not sure that justice is conceived by the Germans as it is conceived by the Allies.

Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that this impression of justice must be obvious not only to the enemy, but also and principally to the Allies. The Allies who have fought side by side must terminate the war with an equitable peace. But what would be the results of following the method suggested by the note of March 26? A certain number of total and definitive guarantees will be acquired by maritime nations which have not known an invasion. The surrender of the German colonies would be total and definitive. The surrender of the German navy would be total and definitive. The surrender of a large portion of the German merchant fleet would be total and definitive. The exclusion of Germany from foreign markets would be total and would last for some time. On the other hand, partial and temporary solutions would be reserved

for the continental countries ; that is to say, those which have suffered most from the war. The reduced frontiers suggested for Poland and Bohemia would be partial solutions. The defensive agreement offered to France for the protection of her territory would be a temporary solution. The proposed régime for the coal-fields of the Saar would be temporary. Here we have a condition of inequality which might risk leaving a bad impression upon the after-war relations between the Allies, more important than the after-war relations between Germany and the Allies.

In Paragraph 1 it has been demonstrated that it is vain to hope by territorial concessions to find sufficient compensation for Germany for the world disaster which she has undergone. It may be permitted to add that it would be an injustice to impose the burden of these compensations upon those of the Allies who have felt the weight of the war most heavily.

These countries, after the expenses of war, cannot incur the expenses of peace. It is essential that they also should have the sensation of a just and equitable peace. In default of this, it is not alone in Central Europe that Bolshevism is to be feared, for no field can be more favourable to its propagation, it has been well noted, than the field of national disappointment.

5. For the moment, the French Government desires to limit itself to observations of a general nature.

It renders full credit to the intentions which have inspired Mr. Lloyd George's memorandum. But it believes that the deductions made in the present note are in harmony with justice and with general interest of all.

The French Government will be inspired by these considerations in the forthcoming meetings when the terms suggested by the British Prime Minister are discussed.

Lloyd George read Clemenceau's reply and—fired up.

He did so in his own individual way. He replied to the French Premier's brutal mockery with cold, biting, merciless truths. If Clemenceau found nothing of any value in Lloyd George's proposals, so much the better ; the British Premier could withdraw all the concessions he had made. He would much prefer to do so at once. He would withdraw them in succession, one by one, and officially, though not so much in the language of diplomacy as of contempt. Up to now Lloyd George had always observed a measure of formal restraint, even during the most direct and awkward disagreements ; he had always listened full of sympathy when Clemenceau opened his demands with a reference to " France's greater sufferings." And Clemenceau had introduced all his demands with this unvarying prelude, this feminine whine amid the ferocity and brutality that were the expression of his inward fury. Always he had worn widow's weeds, played the crushed victim who must be allowed to have what he asked " after all that France has gone through." Now, for once, Lloyd George would not mince his words. If the French Prime Minister was determined, whatever one tried to suggest, to go on displaying the hysteria of the prima donna who has been " insulted," he would frame his remarks for once in the definite expectation of that sort of behaviour. He began to draft a reply :

" If the document put in by M. Clemenceau in reply to my statement really represents the attitude of France towards the various questions which come up for settlement, there ought to be no difficulty in making a peace with Germany which will satisfy everybody, especially the Germans.

" Judging by the memorandum, France seems to attach no importance to the rich German African colonies which she is in possession of. She attaches no

importance to Syria, she attaches no importance to indemnity and compensation, not even although an overwhelming priority in the matter of compensation is given her, as I proposed in my memorandum. She attaches no importance to the fact that she has Alsace-Lorraine, with most of the iron-mines and a large proportion of the potash of Germany. She attaches no importance to receiving a share of the German ships for the French ships sunk by submarines or to receiving any part of the German battle fleet. She attaches no importance to the disarmament of Germany on land and sea. She attaches no importance to a British and American guarantee of the inviolability of her soil. All these are treated as matters which only concern " maritime people who have not known invasion." What France really cares for is that the Danzig Germans should be handed over to the Poles. Several months of insistent controversy on Syria and compensation and the disarmament of Germany and the guarantees of the inviolability of French soil, etc., etc., had led me to the conclusion that France attached an overwhelming importance to these vital matters. But M. Clemenceau knows France best, and, as he does not think all these things worth mentioning, I am perforce driven to reverse my views on this subject. Especially would it be welcome to a large section of opinion in England who dislike entangling alliances to know that M. Clemenceau attaches no importance to the pledge I offer on the behalf of Britain to come to the support of France if the invader threatens. M. Clemenceau suggests that the peace we propose is one which is entirely in the interests of Britain. I claim nothing for Britain which France would not equally get. In compensation, although including the expenses of the war it has cost as much to Britain as to France, I propose that France should get twice as much of the indemnity,

and, if my proposals seem to M. Clemenceau to favour Britain, it is because I was, until I read his document, under the delusion that France also attached importance to colonies, to ships, to compensation, to disarmament, to Syria, and to a British guarantee to stand by France with all her strength if she were attacked. I regret my error, and shall be careful not to repeat it.

"I may be permitted to correct one out of many misrepresentations of my document. It is true I suggested temporary ownership of the whole of the Saar coal-field, with guarantees for permanent access to the coal, but this proposal was made as an alternative to another which I placed first—namely, the restoration of the 1814 frontier. Inasmuch, however, as M. Clemenceau treats this suggestion as a further proof of British selfishness, I promptly withdraw it.

(*Signed*) "D. Lloyd George."

Each of the two Prime Ministers was careful to see that the President of the United States had a copy of this correspondence. The spirit of Clemenceau's memorandum and of Lloyd George's draft exactly reflected the atmosphere amid which in the last days of March the "Big Four" had been struggling to attain harmony.

There had been fresh fights over the fate of the Saar, over the Rhineland and reparations. Lloyd George had taken the President's side; two of them against the French Prime Minister.

France's designs on the Saar lay exposed. She proposed, not only to exploit the coal-mines, but also to become politically mistress of the territory. In his "Fourteen Points" Wilson had demanded the righting of the wrong done to France in 1871. He had made no mention of any French frontiers of 1814. Yet the French Premier obstinately brought up these frontiers again and again in

connexion with the Saar. Wilson was now prepared to let France work all the minerals and mines in the Saar, but not to alienate the territory to her ; he would not allow its annexation. But exploitation alone was not enough for the French Prime Minister. He mentioned that the British Prime Minister had already agreed to " the greater part " of his demands. Lloyd George, however, was equally against a definite transfer of territory. In the matter of the Saar he had only made a proposal of alternatives—either the frontiers of 1814 or " the use of the coal-mines of the Saar Valley for a period of ten years." If the second alternative were decided on, France should be allowed to exploit the whole of the Saar Valley, irrespective of the frontiers as they stood in 1814. In addition, Lloyd George had demanded for France unrestricted rights of importation of Saar coal even after the expiry of the ten-year period. The atmosphere at the moment was by no means one in which the British Prime Minister would be likely to agree to an interpretation of his views by the French Premier which represented him as, of all things, entirely in agreement with the French plan of taking possession of the Saar.

Clemenceau fought toughly. If he could not get complete annexation, he knew of a way to secure the same end in another form. His new proposal was that the Saar should be placed under the League of Nations. The League would then assign the territory under a mandate to France. The mandate should be for fifteen years.

Once more the President of the United States refused. The French Prime Minister had demanded a plebiscite in the Saar on the expiry of the mandate. At the end of the fifteen years its inhabitants should themselves decide whether they would remain with Germany or would prefer in future to belong to France. Wilson knew, however, that plebiscites taken at the end of such prolonged periods

of foreign rule, and taken, if possible, under the foreign rulers' supervision, were seldom genuine ; that under such circumstances alien, dominating, menacing voices had a say in the exercise of the " right of self-determination." He remained as unyielding as Clemenceau. He took up his usual standpoint : the Saar mines and conditions in the Saar should be examined by experts. They should ascertain the ways and means of guaranteeing to France the yield of the mines without, in so doing, furthering political objectives. All Clemenceau's proposals for the Saar were rejected. The French Prime Minister refused to accept the position, and made no attempt to conceal his exasperation.

Nor, in the end, would the President of the United States hear of any separation of the banks of the Rhine from Germany, although at first he had lent an ear to the suggestion. The British Prime Minister scouted the idea altogether. If the Rhineland absolutely had to be occupied in order to collect reparations and to assure peace in Western Europe, there must most certainly be a time-limit to the occupation. If the reparation to be imposed on Germany was to be spread over thirty years, the period of occupation ought not even to be as much as that. Other expedients had already been under discussion for some time between the President of the United States and Lloyd George for guaranteeing to Clemenceau France's " security," if he was filled with such exaggerated fears of a possible new war with Germany. Both of them had already spoken to the French Prime Minister, a fortnight before, of a separate alliance into which America and Britain were prepared to enter with France. The Anglo-Saxon States were to be bound to come immediately to France's aid if she were attacked. The President had even worked out the terms of the obligation in writing. Now he laid the result before Georges Clemenceau :

" A pledge by the United States, subject to the approval

of the Executive Council of the League of Nations, to come immediately to the assistance of France as soon as any unprovoked movement of aggression against her is made by Germany—the pledge to continue until it is agreed by the contracting Powers that the League itself affords sufficient protection."

The French Prime Minister affected to be not particularly impressed with Wilson's offer. Certainly the Anglo-Saxons' promise was of value. But the despatch of an expeditionary force to France by her Allies was no substitute for the barrier along the Rhine. On the contrary—the barrier became indispensable when the expeditionary force was agreed to. Neither of the two arrangements was of any real significance without the other. Once more agreement was impossible. There remained nothing that could be discussed except reparations.

The demand for the Saar had been turned down. The French Prime Minister was determined now at least to carry through the plan for securing money from Germany which the French Minister of Finance had worked out. In addition to the proposal put forward by the special commission of financial experts set up a week before, a more moderate proposal, put forward by the American expert, Mr. Davis, had reached the British Premier. The Germans, on Mr. Davis's estimate, should pay twenty-five milliard dollars. That was the extent of their capacity to pay. When he read this, Lloyd George had declared with a sigh[1]:

"There is nothing left for us but to make our people acquainted with the facts—that we have no possibility of obtaining anything approaching the sum which we expected."

But immediately afterwards Lloyd George remembered his election speeches in London:

"We shall go through these Germans' pockets. . . ."

[1] Retranslated.

He was seized with sudden horror when he remembered first that, and then the Conservatives at home in England to whom he had promised, not only the destruction of the German navy, not only to haul the German Kaiser in flesh and blood before a London jury, but all sorts of fantastic sums in reparations. It was growing steadily more doubtful whether he would be able to stage the Kaiser drama. The Commission set up to deal with this question seemed anxious to bury it. The Dutch Government had been asked whether it would deliver up the Emperor William on demand ; this small nation had replied to the world Powers that it would not. Lloyd George seemed likely in the end to return to London Kaiserless. The question of the German colonies was a difficult one, and its solution seemed still far off. Something or other Lloyd George must take back with him to London. He had tried in the " Fontainebleau Document " to demonstrate Britain's moderation to the French Prime Minister. France alone was to have half of the total amount of reparations. Lloyd George would be returning to England with entirely empty hands if twenty-five milliards of dollars was all that was to be exacted from Germany. He had already sent home Mr. Montagu, whose calculation of reparations had been unduly tender-hearted, and had summoned from London the less tender-hearted Conservatives Cunliffe-Lister and Sumner. It was, after all, wiser to recommend other and decidedly higher figures.

The American experts had been asked by their President to fix a definite debt obligation for Germany and a definite period of payment, but, after all, they had sought another way out. Perhaps, they had suggested, the difficulties of the whole problem could be got round by fixing definite maximum and minimum liabilities and indicating Germany's actual debt as something between those limits, to be established more closely when the damage wrought by

the Germans had been more closely assessed. A special, permanent " Reparation Commission," to be set up on a big scale, with a wide measure of independence, should ascertain and report the damage and calculate the liability. It should continue in existence until the whole of the debt as ascertained had been discharged.

For the first time the Americans had made a proposal which found complete favour with the French. The President had not yet expressed his view of it. But the French Finance Minister, M. Klotz, took it up with absolute enthusiasm. He had not a word to say in criticism of it ; he was entirely and unhesitatingly in favour of the setting up of this " Reparation Commission." Let it go right ahead and compile claims for compensation. From time to time it should calculate what Germany had to pay on one score or another. Only the inconvenient maximum and time limits should be abandoned :

" The amount and duration of the periodical payments will be fixed by the Commission on the basis of the amount of the total debt as ascertained."

Now Lloyd George too was enthusiastic. He breathed once more. If the whole matter was left indefinite and no limit whatever set to the liability of the Germans, he would still be able to deal with the grumblers in England. He even went on to consider whether he should not recall every promise made to the French Prime Minister. Even the promise of fifty per cent. of the reparation payments. In any case, he supported the French Finance Minister's proposals. There would be much less difficulty now with the promised hundred and fifty milliards. He had himself not the slightest belief in them. They were of no significance whatever, in his view, to the British Empire. But he had promised them during the elections.

Quickly he set to work on yet another draft. There was, it now proved, no sum to be specified for reparations. The

Germans were to be compelled to pay this undefined and, if so decided, unending debt—

" Whatever it may cost them ! "

At last Lloyd George found himself on one point, in one corner at least of the field of battle, at one with Clemenceau, though, indeed, he resolved at the same moment on a fight with him. He would not only withdraw every concession already made ; he would take away from him his promised lion's share of reparations and keep as much as possible for himself.

Once more, however, the President of the United States stood in the way. A debtor, said the President, whose debt was not specified, and who was not even allowed to know for how long he had to go on paying, was no longer a debtor, but a defenceless victim of spoliation. Germany's capacity to pay must be determined. Lloyd George himself, in his " Considerations for the Peace Conference," had called for the disappearance of the payments of reparation in a generation.

The sitting devoted to the problem broke up without agreement. Lloyd George returned to the Rue Nitot in ill-humour, to go on studying and elaborating his caustic reply to Clemenceau's contemptuous note. He was in a hurry for it to reach the French Premier as soon as possible. Three days later Clemenceau, still full of indignation at the treatment of his whole " security programme," of Saar and Rhineland and everything else, by the " Council of Four," was able to study Lloyd George's biting mockery, to taste of the unbounded arrogance of this Welshman who had turned his back on him once more. Then he refused to go on, and threatened to leave the Conference.

Everything was in a hopeless mess. At this moment the President of the United States fell ill.

CHAPTER XI

WILSON'S HIDDEN NATURE

He was laid down by an attack of fever, which at first seemed really serious. His doctor, Grayson by name, diagnosed it as Spanish influenza, the onset of which had been facilitated by the extreme exhaustion of the patient. Consultations still went on in the President's study, but the adjoining sick-room was only visited now and then by Colonel House with some brief report. Wilson's actual connexion with the proceedings of the Conference during this period was slight. He was left to himself and to his solitary thoughts.

If he was honest with himself he must have recognized that, in spite of the apparent victory to start with, he had accomplished nothing at the Conference ; that he was actually worse off than when the delegates first drew up their chairs to the table. His work, his plans, were being attacked from every side. He was having an uphill fight in Europe, and another awaited him in America.

He had sailed from America, straight from the President's room in the White House, to this far-off continent, with its smoke-ruined towns and unallayed passions, that he had never before seen. He had set out to effect an ordered settlement between the dehumanized, warring nations. But of these nations he had no real knowledge, either of their idiosyncrasies or their habits and customs, their geography or their history. It was all new and strange to him, and he had not troubled to ask himself whether to be an American History Professor was a sufficient qualification for deciding the fate of some hundred millions of people whose nature, manner of living, and needs were a sealed book to him. He

was filled with his mission, with the living flame of Justice. He would only need to survey at a glance the causes of the world conflagration, to ascertain who was guilty and who was innocent ; and then he would know what, as an instrument of Justice, he had to do. He would enforce peace, and a lasting peace, for all the peoples of the earth—and punish the guilty.

The guilty were, of course, the Germans : the Kaiser, their brutal system—in fact, the whole nation. Germany had invaded Belgium in 1914. She had attacked a peaceable little nation which had never done any harm to any German, and overrun it with her ferocious hordes, who made a religion of brutality. The whole world had been forced to arise and insist on this wrong being expiated and righted. Now he had to devise machinery which would prevent any repetition of such a crime as that committed against Belgium, the crime of attacking a peaceable neighbour, and disturbing the quiet of innocent people. It did not occur to him to investigate whether his condemnation was not perhaps based on incomplete evidence, was not perhaps a miscarriage of justice. He merely pointed to Belgium ; that was enough. The wrong was there, plain for all to see. He had studied history, even if it was only American history, too much to be mistaken in this. The whole blame rested with Germany.

He had not for one moment considered—he who was accustomed to ponder so carefully over questions of morality and justice, constitutional law and statecraft, to weigh meticulously the importance of every word, to brood over every possible implication of each single phrase—he had not considered for a moment whether the invasion of Belgium really had anything to do with the origin of the war, and the burden of responsibility for it. He only saw the fact of the invasion. That something must have gone before, that the invasion must have been the consequence of a previous concatenation of events, had not occurred to

him. He was oblivious of the part Russia might have played in starting the world conflagration. The assassination at Serajevo was an event which to his mind was quite unconnected with the war and its genesis. Had not the Vienna Government despatched a subordinate official, one Wiesner, to investigate the matter, and had not Wiesner, reporting his personal impression of the conspiracy in a careless, hasty telegram, exonerated the Serbian Government from blame ? It is true that he had not waited to find out the true facts by proper enquiry, but then even the facts on this subject had no real interest for the President. Again, Sazonov's efforts at the last moment to make the catastrophe, from which the Czar himself shrank back, inevitable were a matter which had nothing to do with Belgium. In the end the enquiry into the Serajevo affair had proved that the Serbian Government was actually implicated up to the hilt, that in point of fact the whole kingdom had been plotting the downfall and dismemberment of Austria-Hungary, until the Dual Monarchy, faced finally with what appeared to be evidence of the complicity of the Serbian Royal Family in the murder, and fearing for its very existence, took up arms in self-defence ; but even that had no bearing on the origin of the war in the President's eyes. Of course, Austria-Hungary was the Scarlet Woman among the States. It was not to be denied that the President had shown a certain degree of friendliness towards the country at one time, even after the beginning of the war, but his Jugoslav friends, together with the Czech Professor Masaryk, had soon opened his eyes to the truth about Austria-Hungary.

There is not the slightest doubt that Wilson could readily have possessed himself of the actual facts bearing on the question of war responsibility if he had attached any importance to obtaining them. Eye-witnesses who knew what had actually occurred were not lacking. If they had

been got together, without any compulsion, under the all-powerful protection of the President of the United States, in the interest of truth alone, their statements would have been enough to force the Foreign Offices of all the belligerents to throw open their archives, or, if they failed to do so, would have robbed their findings, their incrimination of others, of all value. But the President had no idea of embarking upon so laborious an enquiry. It was quite unnecessary. Belgium had been attacked. It was beside the point that Germany had to take the step in self-defence, admittedly in violation of international law, after the war had already begun. The invasion of Belgium was in Wilson's eyes the beginning of guilt and of the war itself. There was no indecision about his attitude : the Central Powers, and Germany in particular, were the evil-doers. There was no need to hear any further evidence. They were in the dock awaiting sentence. There was no appeal. It never occurred to him, either previously or at a later stage, that, participant in the general guilt as Germany may have been in other ways, this view of his involved a confusion of cause and effect, of origin and result ; that he, the scholar and professor, was keeping his gaze obstinately fixed on a mere fragment of time selected arbitrarily out of a series of world-shaking events, and, prejudiced without knowing it, impervious to correction because as an Apostle of Justice he neither needed nor welcomed it, was taking that moment as the starting-point of the whole. On this point of war guilt he had come over to Europe blind like the Goddess of Justice ; with bandaged eyes, and none attempted to remove the bandage. Indeed, the Allies did their best to knot it more tightly. He had no inkling, and could have none, that in these conditions he was preparing the way not for the Right, but for naked, inexcusable Wrong ; that his way of holding his head in the clouds, high above the world, certainly made for independence,

but also prevented him from hearing the voices of the people below ; that, consequently, when he delivered his verdict from on high, it was not the voice of a judge that was heard but that of a counsel for the prosecution ; that he was, in fact, holding a trial without a judge and without a defending barrister, with only a counsel for the prosecution. Belgium had been invaded : that was the be-all and the end-all of his study of the question of responsibility for the war, and he admitted no doubts.

There he stood in the Old World, an Apostle from the New, a stranger among strangers, essentially helpless. The Czech Professor Masaryk looked at his friend and murmured : " He is a child in all European problems."

The fact was that, although he had set out to solve them, he had made no serious study of them. It was a small matter that this American scholar hardly even knew the names of all the countries in the European continent. Salandra, the Italian delegate, once discovered the President and Mr. Lloyd George together laboriously searching a big wall-map of Europe for a place which every schoolboy knows. But it mattered little that both the President and the British Premier were, as Salandra put it, " ignoramuses as regards the geography of Europe." It was the experts' job to go into details ; they were their chiefs' perambulating stores of knowledge. But the President of the United States had not even studied the most important points for himself, had not, in fact, given any time at all to them. He had not troubled to survey the political and diplomatic foundations on which his structure of peace was to be erected. His idea was that it would be sufficient to conclude an Armistice pact with the enemy which would define the main principles of the peace. He really believed that such a pact would be respected by all parties, and that none would appeal to previous mutual agreements. He knew nothing of any such agreements ;

or, rather, they did not exist for him. It is true that, on one occasion in 1918, Professor Masaryk had spoken to the President about the London Agreement of 1915 in very explicit terms, so unambiguously that he did not need to follow up the conversation with a written memorandum, as the President usually required. Wilson was therefore aware of these commitments ; but he paid no attention to them. They obviously contained definite undertakings by the Great Powers ; yet he asked no more about them, but went on drawing up peace conditions of his own as to which it was doubtful, owing to those very agreements which he was ignoring whether they could be carried out at all. For this meant setting up treaty against treaty, and the other parties to the negotiations were free to appeal to the earlier undertakings. Lord Balfour had paid a visit to America in the spring of 1918, and had spoken to Colonel House about the existence of certain secret treaties, but the colonel had treated the matter in the same way as the President, who made no sort of attempt to sift the matter. Lansing was also aware of the London Agreement, and had discussed the secret treaty between Great Britain and Japan on one occasion with the experts on Colonel House's Committee of Enquiry. In the middle of November 1918 the French Foreign Office, largely owing to pique at the extent of Italy's post-war claims, had suddenly taken it into its head to make a formal proposal to the American State Department that all secret agreements should be abrogated forthwith before any peace negotiations were entered into. No reply was returned. Now, on his arrival in Europe, the President of the United States was amazed to learn that there was such a thing as a London Agreement. Bewildered, as if suddenly awaking from a profound sleep, he now heard of commitments to Roumania, to Japan, of secret undertakings to the British Dominions. He had never considered what the victors might demand ; never

dreamed that they might be concerned, not only about self-determination and League of Nations ideals, but about territory and minerals, shipping and docks, gold and man-power. His dreams had been of quite other realms, and he was speechless when he heard of the cut-and-dried arrangement between the victorious nations for the partition of Turkey. This nonchalant omission to establish the "facts" before coming to the consideration of the peace terms, this facile dismissal of the doings of the world around him, were not redeemed by the sorrow he felt when he found himself, the statesman with the "single-track mind," confronted in Paris with surprises for which he should have been prepared, or the disgust with which he listened in the "Council of Four" to Anglo-French, Japanese, and Italian annexation plans.

He had been well aware that he was no master of detail. He clung to the principle of expert consultation, if only as a means of ensuring just treatment to all. And this applied not only to the list of subjects on the agenda in Paris; he relied on experts, on specialists, for all details of State business in his official activities at home. But he had a Secretary of State who was equally blind to the importance of a treaty like the London Agreement; who left the note from the Quai d'Orsay unanswered, instead of assisting the President to clear the decks before the Conference began; who sat by his side while decisions were being taken, listened to what was said, grasped the President's attitude completely, and then, when his Chief's back was turned, agreed to the very opposite. High in the clouds as the President's mind ranged, he was prone to inexplicable caprices of preference and dislike, and formed his opinions and conclusions on foreign affairs with an astonishing lack of original judgment, relying on the expert representations of his intimates or other friendly advisers. At first, for example, his Catholic Secretary had represented Catholic Austria in a favourable light, and his attitude towards the Dual Monarchy was

accordingly full of benevolence for a time. Then Professor Masaryk's influence outweighed that of the secretary, and he saw Austria-Hungary as an enemy. Personal intercourse and the knowledge thus acquired, the views of outsiders in short, weighed more with Wilson than the reports of his Ministers and officials. His favourite device was to profit by the experience gained by personal intercourse to select "suitable" men for key positions. Colonel House, for instance, was a man who seldom grasped or appreciated what was said to him on political topics, never recognized the core of a subject, never detected contradictions. His second-rate intelligence would never have passed muster in any position in even a minor State in Europe. Yet he was the intermediary who ran hither and thither, looking very important, between the President and the Senate, between the President and Foreign Ministers charged by their Governments with important messages. And the President, needing a man of special capacity for the development of his pet principle of expert consultation, appointed Colonel House as head of the Committee of Enquiry.

The President had devoted no attention to the origins of the war ; had neglected the origins of the Peace Treaty ; had not even enquired whether it had any origins—not even when he was clearly informed of their existence. He had surrounded himself with a staff whose lack of vision and general incapacity were limitless as America's power, and had come over with them to Europe, which to him remained a far-away dim something, formless and void. He had set out to bring to Europe the glowing, free spirit of America, but it transpired that this Professor of American History was not even familiar with the spirit of his own country. America was not at all in favour of the President's schemes. He had brought America into the war, and had consequently entangled himself and the United States in matters which did not touch the life or

security of that country. For a while the nation had shared the triumph of the world-arbiter, but now it was only conscious of complications, and began to speak of that " bad place " Europe, and to feel that, after all, it was not strictly concerned. Some voices were raised, it is true, protesting that it was immoral ever to have interfered in European affairs if now, when America had brought about the victory of one of the two sides in the quarrel, she was to leave the Old World to its fate without troubling about what the future might hold. But the point of view of the American Treasury was simply that Europe must pay its debts to the U.S.A., and most Americans were content to leave it at that. The opposition in the Senate, and the whole public Press, suddenly began to wonder how it was that the President, how any American citizen, could have forgotten, even infringed, the fundamental law of the Union, the Monroe Doctrine.

Thus every weapon which the President had brought with him for his struggle in Europe was fated to break in his hands. He had not realized the strength of his opponents—nor even that he had any opponents. He had advanced into a terrain as strange to him as the mountains of the moon. His auxiliaries in the art of statesmanship had never heard that there was such an art. The President had given no solid thought to any of the problems except his favourite idea of the League of Nations, and all his undertakings in Europe were fated to end in disappointment. He was not aware of his dilettantism, but his opponents were, and met it with tenacity and the refined *expertise* of long tradition. Thus it became finally a mere question of his personal prestige—if he had given thought to that at least—and of his personal courage, whether he could succeed or whether he must fail.

In the meantime he lay a victim to influenza, with a temperature of 103° F. One half of his face was affected with convulsive twitchings. His doctor was Cary F. Grayson, a rear-admiral in the American navy.

CHAPTER XII

THE COLLAPSE OF IDEALISM

Clemenceau threatened to withdraw from the Conference. So far France had not succeeded in carrying one single point in her demands. It was evident, too, that Lloyd George was beginning to withdraw his support from the French Prime Minister. President Wilson was soon well enough to get up again, but immediately after his reappearance not only Clemenceau and Lloyd George, but the whole of France and all the world, learned that he had come to a grave decision which threatened the whole Conference with extinction. He had sent instructions to New York for the *George Washington* to return to Europe. This was apparently the end of all things. Without consulting anybody, without any attempt at last-minute conciliation, the President was off to America !

It was not Clemenceau's threat to withdraw that had been the deciding factor in Wilson's mind. That by itself might have had the advantage of softening the acrimonious tone of the debates. But the President was well aware that in practice nothing would be gained, for Clemenceau was only a mouthpiece of French public opinion, and by no means the most extreme in expression or in demands. The Prime Minister might retire, but his place would probably be taken by the President of the Republic himself, the still more fanatical, still more obstinate Poincaré. No bridge could reconcile the American and the French conceptions of the Peace. There were only two alternatives before the President of the United States : either to impose his schemes on the others by a show of force or to leave the Conference.

The force at his disposal was the American army, two million strong ; and if he had not consented to Germany's disarmament he might now have used this argument to impose his principles, his terms, and his promises. It would have been sufficient to point to America's armed power in the face of an enemy still capable of resistance to induce France forthwith to accept the application to her own designs of what she was already pledged to by the " Fourteen Points." This would have given rise, not to a fresh war, but to a fresh situation : France would have climbed down. She would have been uncertain even of British support, since British opinion was more in sympathy with Wilson than with Clemenceau, and, in any case, was chiefly concerned for prompt demobilization. But the President would probably never have made up his mind to appeal to crude methods of violence, even if this had still been practicable, for the purpose of enforcing Justice and Solemn Pledges. He was a fighter for ideas, a champion of disarmament, had only supported and practised the employment of " force without stint " against Germany because she was an evildoer who had to be punished. Addressing his experts during the first voyage to Europe in the *George Washington*, he had announced his desire to carry on the struggle for his World Peace by strictly legal methods. " If possible by good will, if necessary in anger." But it was too late, in any case, to think of using force. Germany no longer counted. The President did not even entertain the idea of her possible resistance, much less joining him in resistance. The mailed fist of France was evident wherever one looked, and America possessed no effective force at all. The last hour before the Armistice had offered the final chance of mustering such force, of proclaiming it as a guarantee of Justice and using it as a means of Justice. He little knew that that hour marked the death and burial of his visions of a new world. He knew, in fact, nothing at all when he came across to

Europe. He was wiser now. He also realized his lack of effective force. Then he had descended upon Europe as a prophet, in holy indignation announcing a Last Judgment, to mould the Old World's destinies. Now that he had made confusion worse confounded, that his intervention had only led to a decision being determined by the brutal fact of superior force, there remained no alternative for him but to withdraw from the scene, a disappointed, embittered man, and to leave it to the " peoples " to set themselves straight as best they could. He would not capitulate entirely. His pride forbade him to turn his principles inside out, for all the world to see, by an open surrender. Let them all get on with the work as seemed fit to them. But without him. He was going home.

There was still one hope which might perhaps have kept him there : the hope of saving the League after all ; securing the acceptance of his Monroe clauses. His mind returned always to the idea of the League. He knew now what the world and its statesmanship were really like, and what were the real " war aims " of his associates. He could never reform this world in which he lived. But even if he could not build up a Peace as he had conceived it, to set up a League of Nations would be, at any rate, to erect a light-house which would send out its beams into the future—a future in which the nations would perhaps have reformed themselves. This would be a prize worth stopping for, even if he had to tone down some of his rigid formulæ ; even if he had to make a few concessions here and there to the others.

Again, to go back to America might look like running away. It would, at all events, mean a confession of total failure. His own country might well ask of him, when he got back with empty hands, what had been the object in going into the war at all. A cable came from his secretary, Tumulty :

" The ordering of the *George Washington* to return to

France is looked upon here as an act of impatience and petulance on the President's part and not accepted here in good grace by either friends or foes . . . withdrawal most unwise and fraught with most dangerous possibilities here and abroad. President should . . . place the responsibility for a break of the Conference where it properly belongs. . . . A withdrawal at this time would be a desertion."

Self-isolated in the gloom of his depressed mood, irresolute and still weak from his illness, the President hesitated. He hardly saw anyone at this time. He no longer conferred with Lloyd George, who was unexpectedly insisting on his fantastic Reparations figures in a determined fashion, and was demanding the colonies for his Dominions, and all sorts of things, and seemed, with all this, to be drawing away from Wilson. With Clemenceau, who still clung to his military peace as tenaciously as on the opening day, the President declined to have any conversation at all. He cared little, moreover, whether his two colleagues had definitely quarrelled among themselves or not. He thus did not notice the sudden and striking change which had come over Clemenceau. The French Prime Minister had completely forgotten that he himself had threatened to withdraw from the Conference. He could only see one thing, which scared him as he had never been scared before : that the President of the United States had ordered the *George Washington* back to Europe.

If Wilson went, that was the end of the Conference. If he left Europe the war would have to go on. The Germans would never sign. That would head to chaos, out of which order could only be created, if at all, by cold steel, and France would have to bear the full reproach of that. If Wilson went, Lloyd George would follow suit. If Wilson went, away, too, went the separate Franco-British

Treaty, the Guarantee Pact. Clemenceau had always affected to regard this agreement with the Anglo-Saxons as a minor matter, but in reality he regarded it as his chief gain and the most exalted object to be pursued at the Conference. Perhaps he had gone too far. Anything was better than that Wilson should go. He knew the President's most intimate desires, his most cherished dreams. He would hold him back by the League of Nations.

He went to see Wilson, and found him tired out, exhausted with torturing thoughts and uncertainty. He was alone and undisturbed, not influenced by Lloyd George, who had gone to London. It is uncertain, and likely to remain so, which of the two made the first advance—towards capitulation, so far as the President was concerned, compromise on the Prime Minister's part. Clemenceau agreed to support the inclusion of the Monroe clauses in the League of Nations part of the Treaty ; Wilson consented to the Saar valley being mandated by the League to France for a period of fifteen years, at the end of which time a plebiscite was to be taken as to the desire of the population to become French or remain German citizens. After this Wilson collapsed. The Reparations question had, in any case, already been settled on the French lines by Colonel House, acting on his own initiative during the President's illness. This was another instance of his having misunderstood the nature of the discussion and the bearing of the speeches. He had agreed in the President's name that no fixed sum and no fixed period of payment should be given to the Germans. It is not clear why he had so acted —perhaps merely once more like a child, thoughtlessly, full of trust. The President capitulated once more. As to the occupation of the Rhineland, perhaps some way out would be found. Wilson's eyes were dazzled by the glittering prospect of the League of Nations taking definite shape, becoming a historic fact. He had no fight left in

him ; he swallowed the French programme whole. When at the next meeting of the Conference, on April 10, difficulties were still raised in regard to the Monroe clauses by some of the experts—French experts, after Clemenceau had agreed !—he shouted them down in the old haughty, peremptory, Olympian way, as if he were just the same man as ever, and would not hear of any further objections. The clauses were passed. The League of Nations was a reality at last. He had given way to the French over the Saar and Reparations. He agreed also with Clemenceau about the special Franco-American Treaty. Within six days he had capitulated with a precipitous rush which, for utter collapse, far exceeded the surrender of the German army. In one of the little notes he used to receive from Colonel House, who remained just as cheerful and anxious to help as ever, and was finding more opportunities than ever of moving busily about, the following passage occurs :

> " Dear Governor,—I saw Clemenceau again yesterday after you left. He was perfectly delighted with what I was able to tell him concerning the Syrian-Armenian matters, and the period of occupation [of the left bank of the Rhine]."

From this it is clear that the President had also definitely agreed to the military occupation of the Rhineland. The French could have Syria into the bargain if they wanted it. Even if the British then took Mesopotamia. Even if the whole colonial question went by the board. He gave way all along the line. It was an orgy of capitulation, a paroxysm of self-betrayal, and only six days before he had stood firm as a rock against it all.

The surrender of the Saar had marked the turn of the tide. If he gave way on one point, he might give way on others. If he got the League of Nations he might give way on almost anything. It was April 13 when he entered into

the agreement over the Saar territory, and after that both he and Clemenceau had a tacit understanding that any further agreement could be arranged without difficulty. But an idea had occurred to both of them concurrently : that the world was waiting for peace, was anxious to see it concluded, and was complaining of the delay. It was high time, indeed, that something was done. On the same day that the agreement was reached over the Saar it was decided to send for the Germans. They were to be told forthwith that their Peace Delegation was to be sent to Versailles. The world, after all, had a right to see some definite conclusion to the business. Even the Germans might now be allowed to learn what kind of a peace treaty they had to sign.

Even after the heart-to-heart talk between Wilson and Clemenceau there were, naturally, still a few differences of opinion, and technical difficulties. But the great fundamental problems of the Peace Treaty had been settled, at all events for those who were the architects of the Peace—namely, how the Peace structure was to be built up without the architects dissolving partnership. Lloyd George did not come back from London until after the reconciliation. He found the French Prime Minister in triumph, and the President " quite changed, tired, and flaccid." Lloyd George had no desire to raise any further obstacles to the consummation of the chief gain hitherto achieved, a Franco-American agreement. The Rhineland was to remain German after all, even though military occupation had been decided on. Danzig was not going to Poland in spite of the predilections of Wilson's adviser, Lord, but was to become a free State. The question of Silesia was still unsettled, but Lloyd George was clear that Clemenceau's first idea of handing it over entirely to Poland with its capital, Breslau, was quite impracticable. Now it was a question of getting the various committees to go full

THE ALLIED DELEGATES LEAVING THE TRIANON PALACE AFTER THE SITTING OF MAY 7, 1919

speed ahead, working out the details clause by clause, paragraph by paragraph. The result was that most of the committees' work was done with the utmost haste. They were not always sure of their ground, but had the consoling consciousness that their errors and omissions, whether in the matter or the presentation of it, were not of serious moment, since the enemy were bound to sign without reservation in any case. The drafts were passed by the "Council of Four." At one stage the French Prime Minister arbitrarily insisted, in spite of the existence of an agreement to the contrary, on the insertion of a clause permitting the French Government to draft and employ coloured troops for the defence of France, not only of her colonies. He would not listen to the objections that were raised, and the clause was inserted as he had directed. There were also certain incidents originating from outside the Council, such as when the French High Command endeavoured to get an "Independent Rhine Republic" set up, since the struggle in Paris over the banks of the Rhine had not had the result they desired. The American Commandant on the Rhine and the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army of Occupation both entered a caveat, and the matter was immediately reported to Wilson and Lloyd George, who went to the French Prime Minister to protest. Clemenceau merely shrugged his shoulders contemptuously: "Pooh, that's only those generals," and put his foot down on this interference of the army with politics. After that the Rhinelanders' enthusiasm for a republic of their own remained a secret, locked in the breasts of the French generals.

Still greater commotion and more violent differences of opinion—though still not constituting a threat to the peace of the Conference or to the progress of the draft Treaty—were caused by the development of the Disarmament question. There was no change in the decision that

Germany must be totally disarmed. In this matter the views of the President of the United States were more drastic even than those of Foch or Clemenceau. Lloyd George was in favour of the disarmament of Germany and of all the Austro-Hungarian Succession States, his idea being that this would form the starting-point of a universal disarmament. The whole disarmament question had been on the tapis for weeks, even months. There had been sharp disputes with the Polish Delegate Dmowski over his memorandum on the need for a strong Polish army to form a bulwark between Russia and Germany. Finally it was decided, now that the Great Powers seemed to have settled their disputes, to let the " Little Ones " have their say. All the " Little Ones " should be heard. The President of the United States himself should be in the chair. And now, when the worst of the storm was over, there followed, in a series of furious but innocuous whirlwinds, a repetition of the same kind of quarrels as had almost led to an open breach between the Great Ones.

When Benes, the Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, appeared at the special meeting which had been so impressively staged, his first reflection was that the Great Powers evidently did not attach an extraordinary degree of importance to it after all. Only the Secretary, who had sent him the invitation, knew what was on the agenda ; the President was quite in the dark. He, Benes, on the other hand, was very well prepared. Together with the Polish representative, Paderewski, famous in other fields, the Roumanian Prime Minister, Bratianu, and the Serbian delegate, Vesnitch, he had held a preliminary meeting to agree upon the attitude they should adopt when they came before the Great Powers, and more especially before President Wilson. This preliminary conference had been a stormy one. Paderewski had emphasized in impassioned tones the sovereign right of every State, in protest against

the attitude of overlordship which was evidently going to be that of the Great Powers in their intervention in the affairs of the smaller nations. Almost as much emotion was shown by Bratianu, who got very heated on the question of racial minorities within a State. Yet, in spite of a vigorous conflict of opinions and pet themes, the " Little Ones " had finally been able to hammer out a joint programme of demands in regard to disarmament ; namely, that none of the four should disarm at all, and that they should be subject to no compulsion or dictation as regards the strength of their armies, the nature of their artillery equipment, or the number of their aeroplanes. The Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia had spoken least of all at the preliminary conference, though he was not as a rule at a loss for words.

At the meeting with the Great Powers, with the President of the United States in the chair, the British Prime Minister had more questions to put than proposals of his own to make. He was in favour of disarmament. He did not seem to be in an excessively good humour ; he was notoriously no friend of the Poles, and hurled violent words at M. Paderewski. The French Prime Minister said nothing, but Benes had gained the impression from other interviews that Clemenceau's loyalty to the Great Powers was beyond doubt, while to the smaller States his attitude was brutal. The Czech delegate spoke in his rapid way, and with many gestures, in substance as follows :

" We are a new State. We have no officers, no army yet. We are surrounded by Germany. We are uncertain what the Hungarians will do. The Germans, with the technical material they possess, could raise an army ; so could Hungary. . . . What will happen if a nationalist movement breaks out ? Who will come to our help ? Can you guarantee that these things will not happen ? We can muster 30,000 men ; or, rather, we are supposed to be able to. The Hungarians can have 200,000 men ready in three weeks. A

force of even 40,000 men for us is simply ludicrous. . . . These difficulties will last a long time. Consolidation is a slower process than people imagine. Hence the claim of the new States to adequate military strength can hardly be denied at the very outset of their history. We are faced with difficulties in German Bohemia and in Slovakia. The second point is, if anything should happen what will you do? Will you come to our aid? Very well, with 40,000? But we want guarantees——"

Here Lloyd George interposed: "It has never been the intention to insist on complete and total disarmament." But he suggested no definite limit of disarmament, and he would not be drawn into any discussion on the subject of guarantees. The President of the United States then announced that he required further time to consider the question, and the matter was postponed. Details could be discussed later, and the President was, in point of fact, not altogether confident of success with the smaller Powers. They knew as well as he did that France was not going to reduce her armaments by a single battery. It was uncertain whether the "Little Ones" would be amenable, for now that the President had been false to his main principles, the whole basis of argument was changed. He let matters drift. In any case, there was the League of Nations.

On the German aspect of the disarmament problem, however, the President showed himself all the keener. Field-Marshal Haig had suggested that Germany should in future be allowed to maintain a volunteer army only. This would be expensive, and hence would not be likely to be expanded indefinitely, but only as means became available. Foch and Clemenceau feared not only a revival of strength in Germany if she were allowed an army of appreciable size but also the opposite: Germany's undue weakness if her army were too small. In that event they visualized a danger of Bolshevist disintegration in Germany

which might spread to other countries, notwithstanding General Weygand's nonchalant smile at the idea of the victors having any fear of this. If Germany were to go Bolshevist, that would mean her inability to continue Reparation payments.

Finally Clemenceau proposed that Germany should be allowed 200,000 soldiers. Lloyd George would neither agree nor disagree. As was his wont, he had in mind only the requirements of the moment, the demobilization of the troops, an early Peace. There was time enough for that far-distant subject of Disarmament. He did not stop to consider that there was one European Power which had no intention of disarming under any circumstances—France ; that France would thereby become the unchallengeable mistress of the Continent, and that he would be tearing up the old English tradition of the Balance of Power.

The President of the United States, however, took the view that even the French plan left the Germans too big an army, and proposed to reduce the figure to 100,000. Lloyd George concurred with any arrangement that brought a final settlement nearer. He wanted to remove all obstacles to an early settlement. He would have no more delay. Let the Germans come.

But now came a further interruption in the shape of the intervention of the Italian Prime Minister. Suddenly, almost overnight, Orlando turned into Orlando Furioso, and raised a violent protest against the Germans being summoned.

Orlando had sat through months of meetings without opening his mouth except to agree with whatever Wilson, Lloyd George, or Clemenceau wanted. He had waited all these months for Italy's share of the Peace spoils to come up for discussion ; but no one seemed in a hurry. Now he would be put off no longer. The partition of Austria-Hungary, Italy's share of Turkish territory, the confirmation of all her expected gains—all these details he required

to see in black and white before he put his signature to the Peace Treaty with Germany. It appeared that quite different treatment was being accorded to the French and British claims from that meted out to Italy. Her demands were being side-tracked, and everyone was concerned only with Germany. If he, Orlando, declined to sign the Peace document, the united front of the allies would be broken, and Italy would not be a party to the League of Nations Covenant, which the President of the United States regarded as the most important part of the whole Treaty. On the same day that Wilson and Clemenceau had come to a final understanding, Orlando announced that Italy would only agree to the Germans being summoned if her claims were given immediate attention. The claims were considerable, and Orlando's surprise was equally considerable, for he met with opposition.

In strong contrast to the cool, matter-of-fact way in which his Foreign Minister, Baron Sonnino, handled all matters arising out of the London Agreement and that of St. Jean de Maurienne, insisting with quiet obstinacy on the letter of the pacts and their legal validity, the Italian Prime Minister, who had hitherto been a model of sobriety, now burst forth, in wild confused oratory, with a hundred proofs and a hundred reasons why the London Agreement should be punctiliously honoured and why in addition, he should secure Fiume for Italy, although the London Agreement had allotted Fiume, not to her, but to Jugoslavia.

But the President of the United States did not recognize the London Agreement. He seemed determinedly blind to it. Indeed, he grew more and more inflexible about it ; he was determined that his principles should be accorded some recognition in one case, at all events. He had not been successful with Great Britain and France, but the unity at last established among the " Big Three " should, at any

rate, prevail over the weaker and bring the Italians to heel. The President had not made a study of the conditions in Southern Tyrol, and bitterly regretted having already promised the German population of this region, up to the Brenner frontier, to Italy in spite of the principles of self-determination which he had proclaimed. But though this had been done, he was not going to give them Dalmatia as well, and certainly not Fiume, which the experts, despite all the Italian efforts to put pressure on them, had reported to him as the one indispensable port of the Jugoslav and Hungarian hinterland. Orlando had always imagined that, if he said Yes to all his Allies' demands, they, when the time came, would in turn say Yes to Italy's claims. He was now making the bitter discovery that this was a delusion. An emotional speaker, with vivid descriptive power, he had hitherto held himself in check, but he had no sooner made this mortifying discovery than he began to startle Wilson daily, almost hourly, with his temperamental outbursts of volubility. He rejected the President's proposal to hear what the Jugoslavs had to say on the subject of Italy's claims. He declined to have anything to do with the Jugoslavs. He had quite forgotten that Serbia was an ally like the rest. The Jugoslavs were Italy's " enemies," by right, no doubt, of inheritance from the Austrians. Apart from that, Italy had never accepted the ninth of the Fourteen Points, in which Wilson had allotted to Italy frontier boundaries " according to the natural linguistic frontiers." This contention of Orlando's was quite true. During the discussion prior to the Armistice, in November 1918, he had entered a special proviso in regard to the ninth point. Colonel House had once more overlooked the importance of this reservation and had not even informed the President of it. But Wilson was determined not to allow his convictions to be overruled this time, and the only concession Orlando was able to extort from him was a

promise to consult his experts again. Relying on this one gleam of hope that the President could perhaps, after all, be talked round, Orlando now consented to the issue of the invitation to the Germans. But the fight was far from over for him ; in fact, was only just beginning.

The Italian device of bargaining with two parties at the same time and getting as much as possible out of each was the secret spring of Orlando's involved diplomacy.

He thought himself very clever in maintaining to Clemenceau and Lloyd George that the London Agreement must hold good and at the same time admitting that for the President of the United States this secret treaty could have no validity. In this way Britain and France were to help him to secure the gains provided in the London Agreement, neither more nor less than they had promised, while Wilson was to agree, however reluctantly, to handing over Fiume. No one would have violated the London Agreement, and Italy would still get more than that agreement allotted to her.

In the " Council of Four " the debates on this point gradually assumed a threatening aspect. At last Lloyd George and Clemenceau agreed, with a bad grace, to implement the unfortunate London Agreement, although, as they pointed out, all the circumstances had been changed by the break-up of the Dual Monarchy and the whole basis of the Agreement had therefore shifted. In spite of this they agreed to recognize the whole of the provisions of the Agreement as valid. But precisely this adherence to the letter of the Treaty made them totally opposed to the surrender of Fiume to Italy. Orlando quite forgot his customary politeness and restraint, and grew more and more excited and vociferous. But now the Big Three stood firmly united against him. He even met with criticism from other Italian statesmen, who blamed him for coming to the Peace Conference entirely unprepared.

Indeed, he was supporting his first claim by arguments the very rehearsal of which upset and destroyed the next claim he went on to make, and the " Big Three " drew his attention to his lack of logic. He told the President of the United States that he dared not return home without Fiume, to which the President replied that he was convinced that the Italian people would never be guilty of the flagrant injustice of proposing to rob the young Slav nations of their only real port on the Adriatic. When Orlando assured him that he was mistaken, the President drew himself up and said : " I know the Italians better than you do."

The President was surfeited with this wrangling, and decided that it would be preferable to appeal direct to the popular conscience, and turn the searchlight of publicity on the whole distasteful business. He straightway drafted an appeal and sent it to the Press. The Italians themselves should decide what was equitable and what was not. He referred to them as " upright custodians of the new international order," and asked them to " display the noblest proof of greatness, magnanimity, amity, and generosity, the victory of justice over self-interest."

Orlando went off in a rage to the station and took train to Italy. After the successful efforts at reconciliation of the " Big Three," once more for a time the completest disorder reigned, and, what was more, was publicly admitted to the whole world.

In Rome excitement and indignation ran high : Orlando at once issued a rejoinder to Wilson's appeal. He carefully refrained from mentioning that he had received from Lloyd George and Clemenceau before he left a memorandum drafted by Lord Balfour making it clear that Great Britain and France stood side by side with the President on the whole question. The sole villain of the piece in the eyes of Italy was the President of the United States, who

was attacked on all sides. The unfortunate part of the matter was that Italy had other concerns at stake besides Fiume, economic matters ; if she actually became isolated and refused to sign the Peace Treaty her share of Reparations would become uncertain and shadowy. For a moment, just before he left Paris, Orlando had seriously threatened to withdraw the whole Italian delegation from the Conference, but this threat had had no appreciable effect on anyone but Lloyd George, who was mildly alarmed, and proceeded to consult confidentially with Baron Sonnino in the endeavour to find means of pacifying Italy with some alternative compensation. To keep a watch on the economic questions under discussion, Orlando had finally decided, notwithstanding his threat and his own actual departure, to leave behind in Paris the Italian expert Crespi, who he knew was eagle-eyed. He then waited in Rome for Wilson to get over his obstinacy and for the Conference to recall him. But time passed, Wilson's obstinacy persisted, and no one recalled Signor Orlando. Finally the Italian Prime Minister circulated the Balfour memorandum in confidence to members of his Parliament, who thus learned with dismay that their representatives were not only at loggerheads with the President of the United States, but also with the British and French Prime Ministers. To make matters worse, Orlando suddenly remembered that Italy was just then in process of negotiating a loan with American financiers. He was frankly puzzled to decide in which direction the real *sacro egoismo* was calling : towards their sacred aspirations for Fiume, or towards the dollar credits. He was still pondering over this dilemma when he heard from Paris that the Peace Treaty was going to be signed, even in Italy's absence. He realized in a flash that his double game had failed and that all his efforts to secure both the London Agreement and Fiume had been wasted. He would probably have to bestir

himself in order not to lose still more, in order to make sure, at any rate, of what he had been promised. He had left Paris for Rome in headlong haste, and in headlong haste he rushed back from Rome to Paris.

He did not get Fiume. In regard to the partition of the territories in Asia Minor he found the President of the United States equally antagonistic. The problem was to be studied by experts on the spot. Orlando had to see Fiume definitely become an international port, not under Italian suzerainty at all. At the same time he saw the Japanese obtain the fulfilment of their claims under the Shantung Treaty. Unlike him, they had confined themselves in a business-like way to the bare letter of their agreement without attempting any manœuvres. They had demanded neither more nor less, not everything at once and something over ; and Britain's closest ally had got her way in spite of all Wilson's principles, which in this case were obviously on the side of the Chinese, who wanted their land back, and not of the Japanese. The final blow for the Italian Prime Minister was to see Smyrna, which he had been promised, slip from his grasp. While he was threatening and protesting and calculating his chances of a demonstration in force, while in Rome the ruling classes were complaining and crowds were marching through the streets, the British Prime Minister, to be on the safe side, had sent the Greeks to Smyrna.

For Orlando this was a succession of stabs. He seemed to be playing a losing game. Not a single one of his demands had yet been definitely met. But he had now reconsidered his attitude, and decided to co-operate in the work of the Peace Conference in any case, whatever happened. He was anxious to sign the Treaty with Germany on Italy's behalf even if he obtained no guarantees.

Now, at last, the Germans could really be sent for.

CHAPTER XIII

THE VANQUISHED

During the third week in April there arrived in Berlin a brief telegram from General Nudant, on behalf of the French Prime Minister, asking that German plenipotentiaries should be sent to Versailles to receive the peace terms:

"The Supreme Council of the Allied and Associated Powers has decided to invite German plenipotentiary delegates to attend at Versailles on the evening of the 25th inst. for the purpose of receiving from the Allied and Associated Powers the text which they have drawn up of the preliminaries of peace. The German Government is therefore requested to notify at the earliest possible moment the number, names, and description of the delegates whom they propose to send to Versailles, also the number, names, and description of all persons accompanying them. The German delegation must be strictly confined to their appointed mission, and must include only such persons as are required for the express purposes of the delegation."

The Foreign Minister, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, took strong exception both to the tone and the substance of this invitation. There were limits to the language which even victors might use; and limits even to the demands they might make. If the plenipotentiaries were to do nothing but receive the terms without a murmur and take them back home with them, a postman would suffice for the duty. The Foreign Minister sent the following prompt reply:

"The German Government acknowledges receipt of

the communication dated 18th inst. from the French Premier and Minister of War, and will send to Versailles for the meeting fixed for the evening of the 25th inst. the following gentlemen :

" Von Haniel, Minister.

" Von Keller, Privy Councillor of Legation.

" Ernst Schmidt, Councillor of Legation.

" These delegates will be furnished with the necessary full powers for the purpose of receiving the draft text of the preliminaries of peace and conveying this document forthwith to the German Government. They will be accompanied by two clerks, Herr Walter Reimker and Herr Alfred Lueders, also by two messengers, Herren Julius Schmidt and Niedeck."

The French Premier was not slow to grasp the meaning of this, and in communicating the reply confidentially to the Allied Powers he omitted the last sentence about the clerks and the messengers. He then endeavoured to efface the effect and the ill-success of the first dictatorial invitation by wording his second telegram with the greatest politeness, so that it almost had a nervous ring :

" The Allied and Associated Governments are not in a position to receive delegates who are only empowered to receive the text of the peace terms, as proposed by the German Government. The Allied and Associated Governments are bound to request the German Government to send plenipotentiaries to Versailles who will be in possession of as full powers of negotiation on all the points arising in the peace settlement as the representatives of the Allied and Associated Governments."

But Count Brockdorff-Rantzau was not yet satisfied. He requested an " assurance that the delegates and their staffs would be granted during their stay complete freedom of movement and the unimpeded use of telegraphic and

telephonic facilities for the purpose of communicating with their Government." He reserved the right of "appointing special experts to deal with any points that might arise later," and mentioned that there would be some delay in the departure of the delegation.

The French Prime Minister suddenly evinced the greatest alacrity to meet the wishes of the Germans. "The German delegates may commence the journey at any time, as soon as they are ready. The German Government is requested to notify the date and time of their departure as soon as possible. Their journey through Allied territory will be so arranged that they will arrive at Versailles in the evening, so as to settle down in comfort. The German delegates will have every freedom of movement necessary for the accomplishment of their mission, also complete freedom of telegraphic and telephonic communication with their Government. The German delegation can despatch a commission of three persons forthwith to Versailles to make the necessary arrangements for accommodation."

On receipt of this assurance the Foreign Minister signified his acceptance.

The special train, carrying 160 passengers, left the capital on April 28. A swarm of people filled the carriages —Civil Servants, experts, journalists, typists, and messengers. The actual delegation consisted of five men, led by the Foreign Minister himself : the Postmaster-General, Herr Giesberts ; the Speaker of the Prussian Diet, Herr Leinert ; the Minister of Justice, Dr. Landsberg ; Professor Schücking ; and Dr. Melchior. By a coincidence, all six delegates were Prussians, bound for the same town in which, half a century before, Prussia had founded the German Empire. There also accompanied the delegation Privy Councillor von Stockhammern and the ex-Under-Secretary, Dr. Simons, as representatives of the Foreign Office. The special train left Berlin unnoticed. The Foreign

Minister himself was in an uncertain, perhaps somewhat irritated mood. Just before the delegates left, Herr Erzberger, the Minister of Finance, had written to the Prime Minister, Herr Scheidemann, a note in which he referred to the selection of the Count in a derogatory way, using a slang expression current in the diplomatic service : " The Foreign Minister won't be equal [*tanti*] to carrying on the negotiations." But Count Brockdorff-Rantzau had little time to worry his head over his fitness or inadequacy for diplomatic strife or over all he had had to put up with during the past weeks and months in arguments and quarrels, for towards midnight at Duisburg an American, Colonel Conger, boarded the train to interview him on behalf of President Wilson, and as his direct representative.

As soon as the Armistice had been signed, General Groener, the German Q.M.G., had made an attempt to get into touch with Great Britain and America. It was evidently more difficult to find a way to Mr. Lloyd George than to negotiate a private exchange of views with the President of the United States, and, moreover, General Groener placed a higher valuation on Wilson's voice and influence than on Lloyd George's inclination and ability to safeguard the broken enemy from the direst consequences of his defeat. He pursued his efforts accordingly, notwithstanding the fact that the Foreign Office were making similar *démarches*, and he finally succeeded, through his friend Bishop Bertram, in securing direct communication with the President. Wilson appointed two delegates to confer confidentially with the Germans before they came to Versailles. Colonel Conger was one of these and had announced his visit to Count Brockdorff-Rantzau by means of a brief telegram.

What he had to say was blunt and to the point.

" Clemenceau will make a speech," he began, " and then you will probably have an opportunity of saying a

few words. Much will depend on your general attitude."

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau listened politely, but deprecated any conversation on generalities, which seemed to him to be risky, even if on a strictly academic basis, since his main and most important object was to summarize and define definite aims, precise bases, and axiomatic principles. He turned the conversation at once to President Wilson's " Fourteen Points " and said :

" Those are my fundamental principles."

The colonel was evasive :

" If you don't accept the terms you will be compelled to sign."

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau pricked up his ears. The American's words seemed to hint at more than he expressed, and to prophesy unsuspected developments. He went on speaking, and the word " procedure " occurred several times in reference to the delivery of the peace terms. The Foreign Minister maintained his non-committal attitude :

" I am relying on the President's word of honour."

The delegate grew animated, persuasive :

" I advise you none the less to give way. It will be inevitable."

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau realized now that the very essentials of his mission were at stake. He refused to enter into any of the details which Colonel Conger began to pour out in an agitated stream of words : Danzig, Upper Silesia, colonies, each a whole problem. The Count was silent, for he had grasped the vital fact while the American was talking : that Wilson had betrayed, or was about to betray, his own ideals and programme.

He confined himself to declaring :

" For my part I shall never sign anything that departs from the ' Fourteen Points.' "

At this the American's mission was no longer concealed :

" I hope I shall not have to report in that sense."

But the Foreign Minister was insistent that he should receive and convey an unequivocally clear answer :

" You can repeat not only that that is my firm resolve, but also that I had relied on the President's keeping his word, but he has evidently broken it."

The train stopped. Colonel Conger got out and the delegates went on their way.

The following evening, after dark, the special train arrived at Versailles Station. On the journey through occupied territory the delegates had met with no molestation ; occasionally German prisoners had waved to the train when Count Brockdorff-Rantzau or one of the other Ministers appeared at the window while the train was slowly passing through a station. The Versailles terminus was packed with troops. A representative of the French Government was there to receive them and an officer came up and introduced himself.

" Colonel Henry. I have been ordered to see to your reception."

This officer displayed an icy correctness of manner. Not a word more passed between them. Press photographers were busy with their flashlights. The new arrivals walked across to the cars that awaited them. Mounted soldiers preceded them ; they drove to the Hôtel des Réservoirs. Their luggage was dumped down in the courtyard, and trunks, typewriters, telephone boxes, and electrical gear formed heaps everywhere. The French soldiers hurried up to bring some order into the chaos, but fell back at their officer's harsh word of command :

" You are not here to look after the Germans' luggage."

The guests carried their luggage to their rooms themselves. The whole atmosphere of the hotel was icy ; the night air blew cold and dreary.

The apartments in the Hôtel des Réservoirs were speedily made habitable. Baron von Lersner had travelled in

advance of Count Rantzau and his staff to act as billeting officer. A third train followed with the rest of the delegation. They were supplied with all material comforts, with the one exception of a privilege demanded by the Foreign Minister but interpreted by the French in a very limited spirit, namely, freedom of movement. Sentries with loaded rifles were posted outside the gate of the Hôtel des Réservoirs.

Gradually the Germans' confinement was relaxed so far as the hotel park was concerned. At first a fountain half way through the park was the limit of their permissible strolls, but later the whole park, which led up to the garden of the Trianon, was thrown open to the delegates. One day two cars came to the hotel, each with a French officer as escort, to take for drives those of the party who felt so inclined, and thereafter cars came daily. The excursions through the surrounding country lasted for hours ; one even extended as far as Paris, where the visitors saw standing by the Arc de Triomphe some captured German guns. They were finally allowed to visit the town of Versailles itself, and the German ladies made all sorts of purchases. After the four lean years of war the men had been anxious to buy suits and boots, but their womenfolk made a dash for silk stockings and scent with as great an eagerness as they had displayed in consuming chocolates in the train. The French attendants on the train had smiled an indulgent smile, but the citizens and citizenesses of Versailles took umbrage. The police behaved with the utmost correctitude, and carried out their duty of protecting the foreigners with resolute efficiency, but crowds collected when the ladies came out with their shopping, and the mob began to boo and hiss. The incident created an unfortunate impression, and Colonel Henry stepped in and put a stop to it by fencing off the permitted routes into the town with barbed wire. Meanwhile Count Rantzau and his staff set about the work of the delegation.

Some time before, a special committee had been appointed in Berlin to study the probable subject-matter of the Peace negotiations and to prepare material on all the political, economic, and social questions which would obviously come up for detailed discussion at Versailles. The Chairman of this Committee had been the ex-Ambassador Count Bernstorff, a man of progressive, pacific ideas who had enjoyed a certain esteem in Washington through his repeated efforts to prevent war between America and Germany, and whose opinion, knowledge, and judgment consequently carried considerable weight at home.

The Committee had been busy for two months in quickly improvised offices of its own, but, despite Count Bernstorff's versatility and political acumen, its labours had been marked by an uneasy vacillation both as regards topics and aims, and had merely resulted in voluminous and discursive essays without any definite basis. Everything was surmise, since the enemies' actual demands were unknown, and assumptions grew into volumes of thoroughly well-documented apologias directed against opponents who as yet had given no indication of their attitude. Representatives and experts of all shades of political opinion in Government circles had worked with the utmost diligence in this special Foreign Office committee, now preparing a "politico-legal addendum to the Treaty," though no one knew what the main Treaty would contain, now a memorandum on the true facts regarding the population of Alsace, now a note on the distribution of races in Poland. Privy Councillor Fritsch devoted great care to the elaboration of theses dealing with Schleswig and Upper Silesia, while Dr. Simons filled many folios with essays on questions of abstract legal and political theory. Points for future commercial treaties were elaborated in detail, and Privy Councillor von Stockhammern's branch devoted close attention to all sorts of economic problems. Altogether,

thousands of matters were investigated, studied, put into shape, and collated, and the results written down or even printed, so as to be prepared for all eventualities. Two matters only had been entirely neglected : the future of Danzig and of the Saar territory. These, Secretary of State Herr Erzberger had ruled, were so unlikely to be brought up as not to be worth looking into. Accordingly the home-made library of the Peace Committee included no basic material on these two topics. This library had been packed up when the delegation left and was taken away with it, sealed up in large cases, in the three special trains bound for Versailles. When the luggage had been unpacked and it was found that there was still some time to spare, the delegation at once continued the investigations in Versailles. Each morning the delegates met together with the principal members of Count Rantzau's staff, the Foreign Minister himself presiding, and considered until mid-day what possible hiatus there might still be in the material. Still no word came from the enemy. In the Hôtel Vatel close by the newspaper correspondents sat waiting, not without knowledge of the tendency of the preliminary discussions but unable to report a single happening to their editors. The telephones and telegraphic systems were installed, aerials had been erected ; they listened but had nothing to say. In between his experts' sittings, as to the value of which he himself was inclined to be sceptical, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau went for long solitary walks, during which he communed with himself on present and past difficulties, the tendencies in public opinion at home, and the vital necessity of maintaining amid all the conflict those essential principles which he regarded as the sole justification of the stern struggle that lay before him.

He could not exactly count on universal goodwill from Berlin. Amid the general collapse of traditions, and the emergence from below of new forces envious of those

hitherto in calm possession of unquestioned authority, he had remained a *grand seigneur*, heir to more than one interwoven aristocratic culture. He was a true descendant of the old nobility, for whom *noblesse oblige* was a conscious duty, *frondeur* amidst crowds of obsequious courtiers, unabashed at the danger of imperial displeasure, with progressive, democratic sympathies perhaps a little too self-consciously displayed. He stood head and shoulders above the average man. He retained his monocle even in the hour of triumph of Social Democracy. His personal charm could be most captivating, and he possessed that rare quality among Germans, *esprit*, which never left him at a loss for a brilliant sally, an effective retort, or easy banter. The French and Danish blood in his veins gave him a lightness of touch, and the whole mixture went to make up a distinctly unusual personality. He felt the attraction of the play of mind against mind, was quickly roused to compete in mischievous irony, delighted like Voltaire in dinner-parties with sparkling conversation. His witty tongue spared no one, and, with all his winning charm, his manner breathed an intangible distant pride of unforgotten ancestral heritage. His mode of life gave rise to legends which the ordinary citizen relished as romance. He slept during the day and wrote during the night, enjoyed champagne as much as he did wit, and appreciated old French cognac at any hour of the day or night. Revolutionaries felt honoured when this feudal count spoke with them on a footing of equality, but more people were afraid of him, his biting tongue, his fascinating manners, his innate pride which would suddenly, without warning, reveal a yawning gulf. He would sometimes get up on the spur of the moment, whether in public or at a Cabinet meeting, and lay about him indiscriminately. No one forgot this capricious side of him. Many set him down as conceited. As a Cabinet Minister he was often peremptory in his demand for definite decisions. From

the outset of his public career it was clear to him that, though many found him charming, he had no real friends.

He had a predilection for clear-cut lines of policy. Having once decided on a course of action, he would pursue it with a distinct disinclination to compromise, a somewhat trying quality for other natures fertile in expedients and eager for accommodation. They often found him stubborn, but he was only consistent. During the war many of the " feelers " that had been put out, especially in the Socialist direction, had made use of the Stockholm route via the Copenhagen Legation, then occupied by Count Brockdorff-Rantzau. His relations with the Socialist leaders, who had since come to the fore under post-Armistice conditions, persisted, and he cultivated them with the skill of a born diplomatist, which never forsook him except, perhaps, in his differences of opinion with Cabinet colleagues. He was generally considered to be the ablest man in the old-style diplomatic service, but it was largely due to his democratic leanings, combined with his knowledge and his previous dealings with the Socialist aristocracy, that the new Government called him into their councils. In a speech to the National Assembly soon after his appointment the new Foreign Minister declared with some emphasis :

" I hope to convince you that a man can be a convinced democrat even if he is a Count. Democracy does not, of course, mean the rule of the masses as such ; it is for the best minds in the State to lead and rule."

He soon secured a hearing and a following in the public life of the country, and in the Cabinet he was listened to with even more respect.

Although it was obvious that he was highly-strung, and that his nerves were affected by the slightest external stimulus, he was able to master his inward irritation and control its impulses and reactions. During the agitated days of January 1919, when the capital was seething with

unrest and seemed doomed to collapse in hopeless chaos, with the power of the State apparently in eclipse, he kept cool and collected, even when the clamour of the mob raged round the palace of the Imperial Chancellor. The chief People's Commissary, usually so hard to upset, was at that time deeply affected by the murder of the Socialist leader Karl Liebknecht and felt totally unable to concentrate his mind on official business. He accordingly requested Count Rantzau to take the chair at a meeting of Heads of Departments called to discuss urgent and important proposals sent from Trier by the Secretary of State, Herr Erzberger ; and the Count complied unconcernedly. And on one of these same nights of January 1919 it was the Holstein aristocrat who stood out against the not over-confident Commander-in-Chief, People's Commissary Noske, demanding with frigid arrogance, in spite of his democratic principles, that recourse should be had to force. At a stormy meeting presided over by Fritz Ebert he urged the Cabinet to authorize a demonstration in force by reliable troops. The present situation was impossible. He had had officially to close down the Foreign Office, and had announced the fact publicly. He did not want to be obliged later on to divide the officials into two categories, those who had carried on their duties at the risk of their lives and those who had stopped at home.

" I haven't enough men," the Commander-in-Chief had replied. He did not want to risk a fiasco which would expose the inadequacy of the Government's real power, and insisted that the demonstration should be deferred.

" There is no question at present of actually fighting," returned Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, " but if no demonstration takes place I shall be unable to continue to carry on foreign affairs."

Still the Commander-in-Chief hesitated ; but next morning he sent a message to the Foreign Minister :

" Yes, I will march the troops in."

The Foreign Minister's methods were seldom ingratiating, though he could be charming enough when he liked. If things did not go just as he wished he would promptly tender his resignation. The President of the Reich respected and valued him for the influence which he exercised through his air of decision.

The Count was on bad terms, however, with Erzberger, who held that Germany's best chances lay in submission to the overwhelming power of the enemy, was anxious to spare French susceptibilities, and was always ready to listen to the advice of the French go-between, Professor Haguenin, whom Count Brockdorff-Rantzau would not even receive. The Foreign Minister laid stress on the strength of the position created for the weak by the disagreements of the strong, insisted that Germany was still not obliged to accept unconditionally all the demands that might be made on her, and hoped to save at least something from the wreck at the forthcoming peace negotiations. Erzberger had telephoned to him from Trier, where proposals, or rather orders, regarding the first extension of the expired time-limit of the Armistice were being placed before the Germans, that it was essential to accept Marshal Foch's new terms without question. The Foreign Minister had replied that he must first consult the Chief People's Commissary :

" Personally I should decline them," he said.

The Secretary of State grew impatient :

" What objections do you see ? "

The Foreign Minister referred to the needs of the agriculturists and to the vital importance of obtaining concessions on their behalf. Erzberger appeared to realize this and said :

" I will do all I can to meet your objections."

Later he wired to say that the terms had, after all, been accepted without demur. The Cabinet, sitting shortly

afterwards to consider them, failed to secure any appreciable modification. At that time grave and incalculable potentialities bore heavily on the Cabinet, owing to the murder of the Socialist leader Karl Liebknecht and the Communist Rosa Luxemburg. Hour by hour, without any warning, fresh flames were breaking out and threatening the new and unfinished structure of the State with destruction.

The Foreign Minister continued none the less to offer resolute opposition to the acceptance of the new Armistice terms. Matthias Erzberger had in the meantime returned from Trier and explained that it had been impossible to delay signing any longer without risking an invasion of their defenceless country by the Allies. He drew attention to the minutes of his telephone conversation. He had no idea that he had been speaking to the Foreign Minister personally. He had been constantly informed that "Count Brockdorff-Rantzau would have to make enquiries first." But the French had shown no inclination to wait, and every inclination to march.

At first the Foreign Minister said nothing. Then he again threatened to resign. But there was really no point in resigning at this stage. The peace negotiations must be got through first, and armistice terms were not a peace treaty. One thing, however, was clear to him : that he could not rely on Erzberger for any strong support of the policy which he conceived to be the best adapted to existing conditions. In the eyes of the Foreign Minister, the Secretary of State was a "white flag" politician. In the eyes of the Secretary of State, the Foreign Minister was an *enfant terrible*. The chances of harmony were therefore remote.

Since the Armistice many meetings of the Cabinet had been devoted to discussions of the peace problem, and there had been obstinate clashes of opinion, throughout the months of February and March and most of all in April. Erzberger was not alone in his opposition to the Foreign Minister's views and recommendations. The Secretary of

State had just returned from the Rhine districts, which were thick with bayonets. He had seen there, and others confirmed his reading of the situation, a complete readiness for action : thousands of coloured troops, determined on all sorts of outrages if they were let loose ; a wild desire for action on the part of the officers, who were longing for orders to advance ; an ominous ill-humour in the *generalissimo*, who was anxious to celebrate his victory in some more spectacular way—for preference, at that time, by a triumphal entry into Berlin. Erzberger had fears lest Germany should be devastated. Moreover, he was convinced that the rulers of Germany's fate at the beginning of the war had been guilty of many errors and delinquencies.

" We must give in completely," he told the Cabinet, in his broad Swabian dialect. " If we give in completely, they will forgive us."

This question of war guilt came up over and over again at Cabinet meetings. The State archives had not yet been thrown open, and no single statesman had yet had an opportunity of elucidating the motives behind the actions, of following the actual sequence of events or even partially grasping their interconnexion. It was already clear that the question of responsibility for the war was going to be a factor in the severity of the terms ; in fact, the sole determining factor in their justification to the outside world. It was not only Erzberger who took alarm at the prospect, and advocated humble submission as the most hopeful line. Even before the end of the war, when attempts were made at Stockholm, on neutral soil, to find a way out of the butchery by appealing to the working classes and their vaunted solidarity, the Majority Socialists had half committed themselves to this view. Their leader David had at first entirely repudiated the charge of German responsibility, but his convictions had completely changed in course of time, and he now could see nothing but

Germany's sole guilt, like the Communists, whose verdict was plain and concise : " We alone are to blame."

The whole subject was also a distasteful one for the Commander-in-Chief, Herr Noske, whose efforts and thoughts were directed, not to the past, but to the living, immediate present and its demands. If the question of assigning blame for the war was to be discussed at Versailles then the discussion might extend to charges concerning the actual conduct of the war. This would widen the boundaries of the war-guilt question indefinitely, and might lead the enemy Governments to put forward immoderate demands, quite apart from all peace questions proper. If, for instance, they were to insist on the surrender of officers accused of inhumanity, it was possible that the names of Field-Marshal von Hindenburg and of General Ludendorff might appear on the list. The new Commander-in-Chief's young army consisted merely of remains of the old army hastily put together in new formations, and not in the former iron framework of discipline. Germany's Republican army had no traditions as yet. But nevertheless some vestiges of the unburied past, memories of great, heroic efforts, of triumphs glorious at the time for all that they had since been branded as senseless, lived still in the hearts of the new army. The Commander-in-Chief had to be cautious. He was anxious to avoid any question of surrendering the generals, and hence opposed the raising of the war-guilt question.

The Foreign Minister held quite different views. He believed that Germany was not without blame for the events of July and August 1914. To be sure, he had no idea that, at or just before the very moment when he was battling with the fears and hesitations of his colleagues in the Cabinet regarding the war-guilt issue, Serbian official agents were feverishly searching through the Vienna State archives to dispose as quickly and effectively as possible of certain incriminating documents which had

been discovered in Belgrade during the war, and which contained a dangerously accurate account of the secret history of the Serajevo murder. But Count Brockdorff-Rantzau was quite clear in his mind on two points : firstly, that if there were individuals who were partly responsible for the war, they were to be found in every country ; and, secondly, that such individuals were certainly not the deciding factors. He realized all the stresses and strains created by the lowering pre-war European atmosphere, which had finally burst all bonds in the mighty tempest of war. He regarded it as beyond all doubt that Russia had planned the war, that France had seen her opportunity, that Serbia had applied the match. Britain was probably less directly responsible, though the fate of Europe had at that time certainly hung on a word from her. He repudiated the exclusive charge of guilt brought against Germany.

He also saw clearly that the heaping of blame solely upon Germany would be the last great offensive by the enemy and their final attempt to compass Germany's utter destruction. If Germany were guilty, there was no limit to the penance she might be called upon to undergo. If she admitted her guilt, then her punishment was justified. If it was not a question of her offering an indemnity, compensation in some sort for the costs of the war, but of her being punished, then no terms were too severe and no conditions unjust. It was surely a matter of common knowledge on the other side, too, that the whole dispute about sole guilt, non-guilt, joint guilt, was merely a hypocritical sham fight. Quite possibly the other side would be equally unwilling to discuss the question, would endeavour to avoid investigating the truth and simply frame general accusations. But their object would not be to show magnanimity towards the repentant sinner and forgive him, as Erzberger seemed to imagine, but to magnify their demands and extort the very utmost without contradiction. The Foreign Minister

did not intend, however, to act the prisoner at the bar before a court composed only of prosecuting counsel. If there were any question of legal proceedings, accused were to be found in every country, and it was important to impress this on the enemy. This might modify their rigour, whereas if they were allowed to sit in judgment they might be inclined merely to decree. Count Rantzau was therefore in favour of raising the question of war guilt, of illuminating it from all sides, of pressing every advantage to be gained from it ; of turning it, in short, into a weapon of offence.

Hardly any problem of the new post-war order had remained undiscussed at these Cabinet meetings, but the discussions could not be anything but vague and uncertain, since none knew what the enemy's intentions were. The only thing that could really be attempted was to devise in advance some means of defence against all likely forms of attack. The Foreign Minister would have preferred that they should take the offensive themselves by laying down the proposition that all were jointly responsible for the war. He thought that this might lead, by dint of dogged, detailed argument, to their staving off some of the worst of the enemy's demands. Every member of the Cabinet was clear that losses of territory were inevitable, and that enormous financial burdens would be imposed on Germany for the purpose of repairing the ravages of war in the enemy countries.

Erzberger had fixed the cost of the damage in the devastated areas at from seven and a half to nine milliard marks, and made it clear that this figure had been calculated for him as accurately as possible by special experts. His plan was to relinquish the colonies without a protest so long as the price they represented was reckoned as part of the reparation figure. He assessed their value at roughly nine milliards, so that reparations and colonies would just balance and Germany, after the depletion of four years of war, would at all events have no

gold payments to make. He viewed the situation by the cold light of reason, seeing only the enemy's overwhelmingly superior force, by means of which, with guns and bayonets, with fire and sword they could in any case, in the last resort, seize whatever they coveted. He saw only the material power which Germany had lost, which France now possessed, and from which there was no escaping. Ethical and emotional considerations, which might as a last resort be advanced even by a vanquished nation, did not count in his summary of the naked facts of the situation. He looked to efforts within the nation's frontiers to ensure Germany's recovery ; the colonies were in his view hardly a vital part of her organism, and there was a danger of over-estimating the blow to national pride which their surrender would cause.

But the Cabinet did not see eye to eye with the Secretary of State in this, and the Foreign Minister also disagreed. No one could say whether the German Republic had yet acquired the cohesion and unity that would enable it to endure in the face of the inevitable if such sacrifices were decided upon. The admission of the shipwreck of its ambitions as an overseas Power which such an offer to square accounts must imply, the voluntary surrender of the proudest acquisitions of recent decades, would have a dangerous reaction upon the mood of the nation. Moreover, the enemy might well take up the attitude that colonies were unnecessary for Germany if she herself started to use them merely for bargaining. The whole problem was a ticklish one, and difficult to settle. After the collapse, Herr Solf, the Minister for the Colonies, had wished to retain his office, but Philipp Schidemann, the new Prime Minister, had objected : " It won't do ! " The question had at once arisen whether Germany should retain a Colonial Ministry at all. If the Department were shut down, it would be tantamount to abandoning the very idea of colonial possessions, and it was agreed that they must appoint a Minister

for the Colonies if only for show, though Herr Solf could not be retained. There was a further disadvantage about Erzberger's plan : the Allies might take the colonies on the plea that Germany admitted that she did not need them, and might still insist on the full payment of the reparations debt.

For the time being, at any rate, the colonies belonged to Germany or could be included in her assets, on paper at least. Everyone knew that she could not keep them, but whether they could be bartered for something else remained to be seen, and their inclusion in the accounts would have to be a matter for subsequent discussion.

Bitterly as the inevitable loss of the colonies was felt, even more painful and tragic was the thought of the impending fate of Alsace-Lorraine. France had fought the war for Alsace-Lorraine, and it was improbable that a single village in the whole region would remain in German hands. This was borne in upon the mind of the whole nation. Yet the Cabinet were not all of one mind on the subject. About the middle of April General Groener, the Q.M.G., had given expression to his views, speaking as a soldier. The present situation was a gloomy one for Germany. But though it was the immediate task of the Cabinet to extricate their country from the difficulties of the moment as well as they could, he was anxious to avoid mortgaging its future. Let the Cabinet consider most carefully every inch of ground before surrendering it. The general stood there at the meeting in front of a large-scale map and explained one point after another, his hand on the hilt of his sword. He insisted that part of Alsace-Lorraine must be retained at all costs. Otherwise Germany would never be able to undertake the offensive in a future war. " It must surely be child's play," he exclaimed, " to secure what we want if Wilson is on our side." General Groener, who had some gift of vivid oratory, and could certainly sum up a situation clearly and forcibly, had worked himself up

into a state of buoyant optimism. The Foreign Minister, however, regarded such credulity as a grave danger to the success of his negotiations, for which few enough weapons were left to him. " There is no question of child's play," he rejoined, " any more than of soldier's play."

General Groener's line of argument was roughly this—that a Germany deprived of all vital force, robbed of all initiative, no longer formidable, would have no possibility of rehabilitation in the international life of the future. If other States no longer sought Germany's co-operation and support, even as the lion the mouse, then she was fated to dwindle and perish, despised and disregarded. A beggar, a weakling among States, which could only take what crumbs of charity it could pick up and had nothing to offer in return, would be utterly without honour. Every effort must be made to safeguard Germany's position as a Power, as a Great Power, in spite of her temporary collapse. There was nothing incompatible with this in anything that the President of the United States had proclaimed as his object. Even after this war, even after a harsh peace, Germany's value as a potential ally must be upheld. The Reich must regain its diplomatic fighting power ; that was essential.

The Foreign Minister at once proceeded to formulate his own ideas on this subject ; during the mid-day interval he dictated them to a shorthand-typist. But at the resumed meeting of the Cabinet that afternoon a trick of fate prevented him from reading the transcript. He had no sooner begun to read than the electric light failed, and the Cabinet was plunged into darkness. The light flashed up again, the Count recommenced, and a moment later all was darkness again, so that the Cabinet meeting had to be suspended. The Foreign Minister forwarded his memorandum to President Ebert and also read it over to General Groener. The concluding paragraph dealt with Germany's " diplomatic fighting power " : " The nation

M. CLEMENCEAU LEAVING THE TRIANON PALACE AFTER THE SITTING OF MAY 7, 1919

must regain its economic fighting power ! Not until then shall we possess any diplomatic fighting power ! "

Some time after this, and only a few days before he set off for Versailles, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau received a visit from the Q.M.G. accompanied by General von Winterfeldt and two of his Staff officers. The Foreign Minister was never at a loss for an ironic phrase to pass off a situation which threatened to be embarrassing. He could, in fact, deliberately make himself decidedly unpleasant, even unjust, in his dry malice towards people with whose opinions he disagreed. He greeted the party with :

" To what do I owe this honour ? "

Uneasiness and anxiety had impelled the Q.M.G. to approach Count Rantzau. " There is a danger," he declared, " of the Government showing the white feather. I have come on behalf of the field-marshal."

The Foreign Minister at first returned a soft answer. " I appreciate the field-marshal's confidence in me " ; but in a moment he was off in one of his abrupt, violent transitions, from irony to aggressiveness, from politeness to unconcealed rage. He sent for a shorthand writer.

" What is the meaning of these charges against the Government of which I am a member ? If the Government is in this awkward position, it is because we lost the war ! " The Foreign Minister was not going to show the white feather, or to let the Government do so if he could help it. He would like this noted quite clearly.

Soon after this the special trains had left for Versailles. When Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, in his solitary walks in the park of the Hôtel des Réservoirs, thought over the various opinions he had left behind in Berlin—of himself, his work, his aims, and his capacity—he was clear that he might expect anything from the political forces in the capital ; everything, in fact, but the one thing he wanted : unconditional support for the sake of the faith that was in him, and that everyone

recognized in his unique if somewhat difficult personality.

The German nation had laid down its arms in response to Wilson's gospel message of the " Fourteen Points." This message, with the new spirit which it breathed, had overthrown age-long traditions of international usage, practised from time immemorial, which had sanctified the representation of peoples by a few men in authority at the head of each. The phrases of the old policy and statecraft paled before the new message ; they were dispossessed of their old might and made subject to its conception of " humanity " and " humanitarianism." The people themselves, the subjects of the old domination, in whose name everything had been done without asking their consent, though they should in reality have been the rulers, were at last to be enfranchised by the might of the principle of " self-determination," which was to prevail in every nation of the world. Woodrow Wilson was regarded in Germany, as everywhere else, as the standard-bearer of a great World Revolution, carrying its hymn of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, into new fields, extending its saving doctrine from the individual to the community, from the national community to the great family of all the earth-bound, suffering nations. The peoples drank in his words. The new melody was even more intoxicating than the songs of 1793, for it spoke no longer of violence and blood and the sword, but had overcome these things. Human morality, human dignity, were to be the final conquest of the new age, this age born in sorrow but destined to be immortal.

All Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's thoughts circled round the essence of the great Wilsonian message : its ethical content. Germany was now defenceless. Her guns were silent ; only her enemies' artillery still remained in position. Her soldiers were no longer to be brought to march ; on the other side, army corps after army corps stood ready. If the struggle was to go on, she must leave her former

weapons where they lay and try to forge new ones. And Wilson's world evangel was the only arsenal from which Germany could equip herself for her last solitary stand.

International justice, violated, set at nought through all the thousands of years since the world began, was the supreme law of the President's New Order. He had scattered slogans among the peoples of the earth which rang through their tortured souls like trumpet calls : they were no longer " to be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were mere chattels and pawns in a game " ; they were to demand and exercise the right of self-determination. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau seized on this ethical element ; he would arm himself entirely from this ethical armoury. He felt the almost religious power which went out from Wilson's message and inspired all the peoples. It could not be in harmony with this gospel, if Wilson were a true prophet, for a nation of seventy million souls to be ostracized by all the rest, many of which were smaller and perhaps less well endowed with spiritual gifts. If that was the President's intention, then it was superfluous to have promulgated the message of salvation to Germany at all. In that case the guns might as well have gone on firing, the army corps have gone on marching. But the last great battle of the war, announced a year previously, prepared for for more than a year, had been fought by the President of the United States with his " Fourteen Points." It was by these that he had conquered Germany, these were his chosen weapon for the conquest and reformation of the old Germany, with its mediæval spirit, its bluster, its glorification of the mailed fist. Germany was the nation which, according to Wilson, was to be turned into a proper, purified member of that society of nations of the future which was his aim, his dream, the whole content of his mind. But if Germany was not to be a pariah among nations, if justice was to be the supreme arbitrix in

international relationships, then it was not only right that Germany should comply with the demands of justice, but also that she should demand justice for herself, even in defeat. The President of the United States had brought over to Europe new weapons from the New World, and had not only used them against Germany—with greater success than Foch had had with his—but had pressed them into her hands. Wilson's gospel was Count Rantzau's sole means of defence. Wilson's weapons were the only ones he could go on fighting with, and he was all for accepting them and turning them against the enemy.

For the moment, however, it was not altogether clear against which enemy he should use them—whether against the President himself, if differences arose over the interpretation of the various gospels, or against the President's friends and associates if they arose over questions of depredation rather than interpretation. It was difficult for him to estimate from a distance how great Wilson's influence with the Allies really was. And it was, after all, a matter of indifference to Count Brockdorff-Rantzau whether in embracing the gospel according to Wilson he would be antagonizing the President himself, or the President's associates through the appeal to the President, or those same associates direct if, after having allowed the President to speak and to wield his silent influence all this time, they were now to be quite merciless in their demands and to try to impose impossible terms. The ethical content of the Wilson gospel undoubtedly presaged an heroic revival of the world spirit. It almost amounted to a religion, inspired by a combination of divine and earthly fire, since humanity seemed at length to be awakening. If the peoples of the earth proved to be mature enough to proclaim and adopt the new religion, then Count Brockdorff-Rantzau was willing to modify that scepticism which was a part of his nature. It was not emotional intuition,

but a dispassionate intellectual survey, which enabled him to appreciate the vast mission that could be fulfilled if only this religious revival were successful. His restless, impetuous temperament, ambitious and unhesitatingly so, had always been on the side of progress ; in fact, impatient as he was, and too clear-sighted to be content with the outworn and the effete, he had often tried to drag the chariot of progress forward at his own pace. He was anxious to co-operate to the utmost of his power in building up the new world and in contributing to the salvation of humanity. He was fully conscious of the grandeur of the idea of a redirection of human aims along new paths after the war. But he was prepared to console himself if it should turn out that mankind was still the same even after a course of Wilson's Salvationism. Personally he was chiefly concerned, among all the nations that were to be freed, for Germany : Germans never should be slaves. If Woodrow Wilson was a dreamer, a man of the study immersed in breviaries of other worldly rituals telling of bliss beyond our reach, then Count Brockdorff-Rantzau would allow his idealism to be outweighed by scepticism, which always provides a shield, a sword, and a fighting position. If the President of the United States lost the thread of the message through his will and energy proving to be weaker than the rapacity of his associates, then Count Brockdorff-Rantzau would still hold firmly to the defensive technique with which the President's gospel had equipped him. Whether it was to be a question of World-Reconstruction or of diplomatic manœuvres, of a new religion or a politicians' wrangle, of ethical principles or naked greed cloaked in moral phrases, of substance or technique, the President's vocabulary, his categorical imperatives and his precise definitions, would be Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's sole arsenal. He examined the problems of the peace settlement, step by step, from the point of view of the possibility of developing them before

Wilson, against Wilson, and with the aid of Wilson's technique. So he would save from the wreck all that could be saved. The sceptic in him was still stronger than the idealist, and in his heart of hearts he felt that a good technical equipment would be of greater assistance to him than a trustful reliance on ethical values.

Wherever Count Brockdorff-Rantzau looked, he saw clear indications of the struggle that would be needed to extricate Germany with as little injury as possible from her overwhelming defeat. Her enemies coveted her colonies. France was determined to have Alsace-Lorraine. The French industrialists were showing that they too could put forward demands, like their German colleagues, who, in the days when the war was going well for Germany, had dreamed of annexing the iron mines of Briey. The French now conceived the notion that they could not carry on their business without the coal-mines of the Saar. The Allies would deprive Germany of her navy, to preserve the security of the seas ; but Britain was also concerned with the German mercantile marine. Not that Britain needed it to enrich herself ; it was merely that its retention in German hands was a danger which Britain was determined to remove. Cessions of territory would be demanded by the Poles, the Danes, and possibly even the Czechs. Certainly the old French aspiration would be revived—a heritage of Louis XIV's predatory campaigns—to split off the Rhineland from the Reich and to set up on the left bank an independent State under France's ægis, to act as a buffer-state between France and Prussia. If practicable, the French would undoubtedly attempt to introduce a new Main frontier in the future map of Germany. From all sides attacks were to be expected.

And Germany was not only to be weakened and impoverished by actual losses of territory, of concrete, definite strips of land with their populations ; her weakness

and impoverishment in the future were to be enhanced and maintained by other means as well. Germany alone would be called upon to reconstruct the areas in the Belgian and French battlefields which had been devastated by British, French, and American shells in deadly rivalry with those of Germany. She alone would have to fill and fill again her depleted State coffers from the taxation of coming generations, simply to defray the costs of the war for all the belligerents herself. A strong debtor, especially if he could recover his strength a little, could be well squeezed, but for this purpose a fresh war might be necessary. Germany would have to lay down all her weapons, so that, if the worst came to the worst, the new campaign would be a bloodless march by an armed Commission of Tax Collectors. This measure would also obviate the risk of seeing the debtor, driven at present to despair and in the depths of humiliation, one day rise in retribution and revenge. All this was not in Wilson's programme ; it was all against his programme. But it might all be included in the enemies' demands, even under the banner of the " Fourteen Points." It was all a question, for the enemy of their interpretation, for Count Brockdorff-Rantzau of how much of their interpretation he accepted.

He was willing to accept anything in reason. But all the belligerents were equally responsible for the outbreak of the war. Germany should rebuild what she herself had destroyed, but should not pay the costs of the war. He could understand the French desire to annex Alsace-Lorraine, their unforgotten aspiration from past centuries. But human communities must not be "bartered about" like " pawns in a game." Many in those frontier districts were actually Germans. What the President of the United States had laid down in regard to the self-determination of peoples was just as applicable to Alsace-Lorraine as to the Czechs or Italians, to German Silesia just as much as to

Poland. Possibly the Alsatians would not desire to go over to France, but would rather remain part of defeated Germany. Let them say and decide for themselves. The Foreign Minister would claim a plebiscite. In point of fact, this new right of self-determination was only an act of belated justice in the world. Standing before the Areopagus of the new Wilsonian International Law, he would demand that as a mere matter of course the separation of strips of territory from the Reich on the sole ground of the French industrialists' need of coal for their iron ore should be prohibited. The President of the United States would be stultifying himself entirely if he permitted this.

The President's Temple of Justice provided, almost automatically, a proper niche for all the problems of the world. If the cry were raised on all sides that Germany had exploited, enslaved, and ill-treated the inhabitants of her colonies, and must therefore be deprived of them, then Count Rantzau would bring evidence to prove that Germany had behaved no worse in her colonies than the others in theirs, and that the only solution was to deprive every nation of its colonies and let even coloured peoples exercise the right of self-determination. Alternatively, Germany must be allowed to keep her possessions; incidentally, he had a useful suggestion to offer. To ensure that all colonies should henceforth be really administered with justice, there should be instituted an international organ of control. The all-wise, incorruptible Arbitration Court to be set up by the great League of Nations, which the President of the United States seemed to regard as the essential feature of the New World Order, would be admirably fitted to act as a tribunal for the adult white races, to review all that happened in the colonies. Further, it surely went without saying that the great League of Nations which the President of the United States was so anxious to see established, should be entrusted with

supreme power, and the instrument of power, an army, composed—why not ?—of contingents from each and every nation, which would give them all at last the protection they needed from invasion by a wanton and predatory aggressor. In that case Germany, having of course contributed her contingent like the rest to the new European control troops, would take her place in the International Hall of Justice, as a co-equal member of the New World Order entitled to the respect of her colleagues. If, in short, the President's gospel held good, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau could find an answer to every attack. Germany's sacrifices would then at all events be tolerable. He had, indeed, a further point to make. He would show that even a broken country like Germany, still quivering under the shock of defeat, could enrich the mighty work of peace initiated by the President by suggestions of her own.

The reform of the world was not completed when frontiers had been adjusted on lines of justice, when territories and towns and men and women had been transferred to the nations to which they rightly belonged. If the world was to be cleansed of all injustice, it was not enough to consider only political wrongs. The idea of the National State was in future to be that of a homogeneous unit admitting no foreign domination of any sort. But the State had hitherto been merely the external national framework enclosing, or endeavouring to enclose, a social structure within which men and women lived mostly hard and burdensome lives. In the heart of all the peoples, a nation within each nation since the time of Marx, there lived the working class, which had for decades been groping towards unity and organization, struggling for the right to live, for the right to decent human conditions. In the war this nation of the proletariat had paid heavy toll, but in the interests of alien ideologies. In the many battles of the war it had made, whether from patriotism or under compulsion,

greater, or at all events more numerous, sacrifices than any other class or social group. Even before the war its conditions of life had been bad, worse than its hard toil should have secured for it. When its misery had resulted in acts of violence, volleys of musketry had been the only answer. Yet even now no one proposed to deal seriously with the needs of this great, this vast nation of the workers. Here were injustices to be set right, here even more than among many a hemmed-in national " minority." In the present wholesale political settlement, the nations must not fold their hands before this problem ; never had a more favourable opportunity presented itself of putting an end to all the social misery in the world. If it were possible to solve all problems by reason, by investigation and arbitration, surely the problem of turning a wage-earner into a human being could be tackled, and tackled successfully. If Germany was called upon more than any other nation to make an entirely fresh start in her national life, it was only fitting that she should lead the way in really fundamental social reform. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau desired to see, not only the nationalities, but also the working classes, set free. The New Spirit in Germany would denounce the capitalistic treaties of violence which she had imposed on a hundred million souls and more at Brest Litovsk and at Bucarest only a year since, when she still placed her trust in guns and bayonets. Germany would bring before the World Areopagus, not a few selected problems, but every problem, and so all the sufferings and all the claims to justice of the working classes. The work tentatively begun at the Labour Conferences at Leeds and Berne should be wholeheartedly and triumphantly carried to completion in the Peace Treaty. Measures for the protection of the worker, already existing in some degree in Germany, should at last be introduced everywhere ; Old Age Pensions for superannuated workers should be placed on a firm foundation, irrespective of

whether the recipient wished to spend the evening of his life in a foreign country, if he had been employed there, or at home. The workers ran more serious risk of physical injury than any other class, and insidious diseases attacked them more readily. Insurance schemes, secured by statute in every country, must be introduced as quickly as possible, and maternity benefits for working mothers, who hardly knew what it was to get a day's rest between ceasing work and confinement, between childbirth and the hasty return to their daily labours. When the laws for the protection of the workers, for the regulation of their working day, for the further education of their children, came to be drafted, the representatives of their great organizations must be allowed to give evidence. They must also be given a seat on the Arbitration Court which would adjudicate as the final and supreme tribunal in all cases of doubt and dispute between the workers and the State, or the employers, or other groups of workers, in precisely the same way as the League of Nations was destined to settle disputes between nations. Disputes between nations led to wars. Disputes in which the workers were involved led to strikes. Both wars and strikes were merely social diseases, retarding or destroying human progress. Germany was anxious to do everything possible to co-operate in the healing of the sick world. Germany would show, if she were allowed to appeal to reason, that she was ready to stake anything, both in the moral and the material field, to ensure the future welfare of the world.

If she were allowed to appeal to reason ! Aye, there was the rub, in every field in which peace was to be sought, and not only in the struggle to be anticipated over the one possible gain that Germany might hope to secure from a settlement which could not fail to be severe and punitive : the struggle for the return, long overdue, of the German-Austrians to the bosom of their motherland. The right of self-determination was valid for all peoples, and must be

applied to all. It seemed, therefore, beyond all shadow of doubt, that it could not be vetoed in the one single instance where its application might benefit Germany. But, apart from this delicate topic of the one possible source of enlarged territory for Germany, not one problem of the peace could be solved without discussion, without debate, without careful weighing of pros and cons. To judge by every indication that had come from the enemy camp so far, and particularly by the first peremptory summons to them from the French Prime Minister to send delegates to " receive the peace terms," it looked as though the Peace Conference did not intend to permit any discussion at all. The German Foreign Minister was not aware of all that had happened, and was still happening every day, among the Allies. Their terms were evidently already cut and dried. He would evidently have to make a strong stand to obtain any sort of discussion. Wilson's " Fourteen Points " indicated, quite apart from their ethical tendencies, an esoteric technique by which the struggle with his opponents might be carried on if the idealism of the Wilson gospel foundered. But Count Rantzau became aware that he was not even sure of his ground as regards the superficial technique without which he could not hope to make use of the other esoteric technique. He was not only ignorant of what had been going on inside the enemy's camp ; he had learned as yet nothing at all as to the substance and extent of their demands. He would have to spar for an opening if the first peremptory order was to be led into a conversation, the conversation into a discussion, the discussion into an agreement. The first round must be devoted to technique—the purely formal methods of getting to grips with the subject-matter, and through it with those who had determined its choice. Then perhaps the rest would follow. For the present he could only wait and see how the other side began, and it was with the object of getting them to

begin as soon as possible that Count Brockdorff-Rantzau and his delegation had come to Versailles.

Four days, however, had now elapsed since the German delegation reached Versailles, and still nothing had occurred to disturb either Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's reflections or the conferences which went on daily in the Hôtel des Réservoirs, and minutes of which were conscientiously kept by Herr von Haniel. The members of the German Peace Commission seemed non-existent for the Allies who had summoned them. They did not know that the enemy had sent for them in such a hurry primarily as a visible consolation for their own long-drawn-out disagreements.

Finally, on May 5, Colonel Henry called on them and brought with him a memorandum which was actually addressed to him, but which he read out word for word. It was proposed that the two sides should proceed to examine each other's credentials, and Jules Cambon had been appointed chairman of the Commission on the Allied side which was charged with the duty of examining the documents in question. Cambon, together with Messrs. Bonar Law, Withe, and Jishi, would expect Count Brockdorff-Rantzau and the other plenipotentiaries in the Hôtel Trianon that afternoon at a time to be fixed.

The play was beginning. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau replied, but with a proviso. If he himself, on the German side, headed the Commission for the exchange of credentials, it was only right that Clemenceau should accompany the enemy's Commissioners. He therefore requested the French Prime Minister to attend. Clemenceau, however, declined. Count Rantzau was reluctant to break off negotiations on such grounds, and therefore replied to the French Prime Minister that he would duly attend, but not to examine the credentials himself, merely to introduce Dr. Landsberg, the German Minister of Justice, whom he, as

head of the German delegation, had appointed to deal with the examination of the documents.

The Foreign Minister, with Dr. Landsberg, Dr. Simons, and Privy Councillor Gauss as plenipotentiaries, duly drove up to the Hôtel Trianon at 3.15 p.m., as arranged. Adjutants were standing in the vestibule, also a number of people in civil attire—secretaries and so on. The four Germans walked in, with no word spoken on either side. One of the adjutants conducted them to a small room where five or six persons were waiting. The French Prime Minister was not present. A Japanese was standing motionless in one corner, half hidden by some palms, his face rigid as a statue. An Englishman, Lord Hardinge, had been added to the party.

Jules Cambon stepped forward. The whole action moved quickly, as though it had been well rehearsed, speech following hurried speech, all in a subdued tone. Cambon opened the proceedings. He realized that the Germans were placed in an awkward situation. He would waste no time in preliminaries. He begged to introduce his colleagues. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau replied in German. His voice was not perfectly under control, betraying now and again his nervous tension. Since M. Clemenceau had not come to the meeting, he wished to make it clear that he too would not be concerned with the formalities of the exchange of credentials. He begged to introduce Dr. Landsberg, the Minister of Justice of the Reich, who would head the Commission for the examination of credentials. Cambon went on again, in the same quiet voice, still addressing his remarks to the Foreign Minister, but Count Brockdorff-Rantzau declined to take any further part in the proceedings. The Minister of Justice, not he himself, was the chairman of this Commission. The ten participants stood for a moment in silence in the little room. Then, with a few murmurs rather than speeches, the documents were presented on both sides.

Barely five minutes were spent on this first interview :

the business was over. Formal bows were exchanged, and the Germans left. Their car noisily started off. The Japanese was still standing like a bronze figure.

The examination of the credentials did not take long. Cambon notified the German delegation at the end of a few days that the Committee appointed by the Peace Conference to examine the documents accepted them as valid. Dr. Landsberg replied in similar terms, but added a few remarks on certain discrepencies that had been observed during the scrutiny of the credentials of the representatives of the Allies. Two of the countries with whom Germany was in a state of war—Montenegro and Costa Rica—had presented no documents, whilst, on the other hand, the Arabian State of the Hedjaz, with which Germany was not at war, had sent accredited representatives. The German Government knew nothing of this State, and had never recognized it. As it had apparently been constituted from part of the Turkish Empire, they held the view that it must first be recognized by the Ottoman Government. Again, the Allied documents had included credentials for representatives of the Czechoslovak Republic, whilst similar particulars of the delegates of the new Polish State were missing. Croats and Slovenes, moreover, had suddenly appeared among Germany's enemies at the Conference, as they had amalgamated with the kingdom of Serbia. The German chairman of the Commission for examining the credentials merely wished to point out these few discrepencies, and begged to remark that, so far as the Republic of Czechoslovakia was concerned, Germany did not regard herself as in any way at war with this State. With these remarks he returned the collection of documents. Cambon merely reported the German remarks to his Commission.

But, while this was in progress, an event of far greater importance had occurred. The German delegation received their copy of the " Agenda for a meeting to be held

on May 7, 1919, at the Trianon Palace Hotel in Versailles." With it came a memorandum "communicating to the German delegation the procedure proposed to be followed." The peace terms were to be handed to the German plenipotentiaries at 3 p.m. on that day. The French Prime Minister himself, M. Georges Clemenceau, was to instruct the German delegation as to the circumstances under which the Peace of Versailles was to be concluded. The present document gave them to understand in advance "that there was to be no verbal discussion of any sort, but that any remarks were to be put forward in writing." The Supreme Council would give the Germans a period of fourteen days during which they might formulate queries, only queries, and these were to be in English and French. The document set forth the various headings under which the subject matter of the Peace Treaty would fall—League of Nations ; Germany's Geographical Frontiers ; Political Clauses (*a*) European, (*b*) non-European ; and so on—and each heading was further subdivided under short descriptive labels dealing with almost every problem with which the peace settlement was concerned. After dealing with the German queries, the Supreme Council would decide on a time limit within which the German delegation would be required to deliver their "final answer" as to whether they were prepared to sign the Treaty as drawn up or would reject it.

There was not much time for them to consider what attitude they should adopt towards this "communication." In any case, their remarks, if they had made any, would probably not have been listened to. The Foreign Minister was free either to appear before the Peace Conference or to return home again. There was no other alternative. To return home meant a renewal of the war and an abandonment of the prospect of a diplomatic duel. Accordingly, on May 7, 1919, at a few minutes to 3 p.m., Count Brockdorff-Rantzau and his fellow-delegates drove to the Trianon Palace Hotel.

CHAPTER XIV

THE HOUR OF RETRIBUTION

The cars conveying the German delegates drove through the big park gates, which open on the main road from Paris to Versailles ; they passed the crowds lining the streets and grouped at each side of the gates, and made their way to the rear of the Palace. A small detachment of French riflemen were standing at attention beneath the old trees in the park, the officers with raised swords. The little procession was led by Colonel Henry and an English colonel on the Staff. Both their car and all the rest, including Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's grey car, were driven by French chauffeurs. For a few moments the party waited in the vestibule, a group in dull everyday clothes surrounding the Foreign Minister, who was dressed in black and looked pale. Without moving, without apparent hurry, he stood leaning on his stick until all his staff had arrived. Then he walked at their head through the narrow corridor leading to the Conference room, followed surreptitiously by innumerable glances through half-opened doors and windows, from cloak-rooms, bar, and smoking-rooms, whence inquisitive eyes tried to catch a glimpse of the Germans. English officers and French captains climbed up on tables and armchairs and sofas, anxious not to miss the thrilling moment, while their American colleagues blew out clouds of smoke from their cigarettes. Footmen opened doors quietly and peeped through, camera-men were busy—but in a few seconds all was over, the party had crossed the ringing stone flags of the passage and stood at the entrance

to the Conference room, where Colonel Henry announced them in his sharp, clipped, soldierly voice :

" *Messieurs les délégués allemands !* "

At first sight it seemed to the Foreign Minister and to all who were following him as if they were walking into an empty department. A few tables stood in front of them, unoccupied. Then a noise of the scraping of feet and chairs, of a large company rising to their feet, was heard ; they went a few steps farther and then stopped, their eyes dazzled. From eight large windows and an enormous glass door a sea of light flooded the room, which had white walls, adorned only by arms and fire appliances, in white settings. The glare was reflected from white pillars and four glittering crystal-hung candelabra and from a vast mirror covering one wall, which magnified it tenfold. The newcomers did not realize the presence of the mirror at first, and only saw dimly, through the sea of light, a picturesque vision of green lawns, dreamy clusters of flowering shrubs, and groups of trees scattered at random over an empty expanse of meadow-grass. The noise drew their attention to the left end of the room ; they turned and saw with startling suddenness the whole awful array assembled to meet them, eager for this moment, arranged in a semicircle like the auditorium of a theatre. This was the World Court of Justice that awaited them, standing revealed with this theatrical effectiveness, fully conscious of the startling effect produced on the surprised, dazzled men in sombre black.

The Foreign Minister bowed without speaking. His salute was returned without a word. Into these fleeting seconds was concentrated, for the victors' delectation, the final consummation of events dimly anticipated, visions often limned by desire and now become reality. The shuffling of feet continued, and the six German delegates took their places without further delay at the far end of the

room. The high Areopagus, too, had resumed their seats, in the foreground a long double line of tables with fifty-three delegates from every country under the sun, many of them only a name to the six isolated Germans, little more than a reminiscence of long forgotten school-days come to life in exotic vividness. High up above these fifty-three expectant faces, so different from each other in feature, colour, and racial expression, but now all composed in silent, uniformly attentive deference—high above them sat the "Council of Four." No one knew why Signor Orlando's place was vacant.

From his seat between the President of the United States and Mr. Lloyd George, the French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, rose to speak. Wearing a dark frock coat, he stood there, a small, thick-set figure, his plump hands clad in grey gloves, half-clenched but not completely closed, his lips hidden beneath a bushy white moustache, the whole of his round, yet angular, almost carven face set hard in furious determination, scanning the assembly with a menacing, unquiet, dangerous scowl fixed by bitter, deeply scored lines and wrinkles. He began to speak, and the voice was noticeably harsh with the superhumanly rigid self-control acquired by long years of repression. There was no uncertainty of tone, though the speaker's broad chest began at once to swell and contract more quickly than usual. He was still under the restraining influence of the historic sense, conscious that this instant of time would be remembered and recorded to all eternity, yet also under the lash of instinct, unconsciously driven forward by the visions of past sufferings and future retribution which had long been concealed in the hidden depths of his being. Georges Clemenceau was not looking into the future any longer to speculate on possible developments generations hence. He had provided for the security and defence of his country as well as any clear-sighted,

prudent man could foresee, and now could only see what lay before him : a belated but gloriously ruthless fulfilment —six delegates summoned from a defeated, broken nation on whom he was going to visit the retribution sworn to his own people fifty years before at Bordeaux. Through them he would fling the words of doom straight into the face of the nation he despised and hated. He had weighed and sifted every word of his discourse beforehand, but it was the voice of Vengeance, freed now from all restraints and scorning adhesion to the prescribed text, that cleft the air relentlessly, passing over the heads of the attentive audience of world leaders, assembled to witness the spectacle, mercilessly penetrating to the end of the hall where the condemned defendants sat, silent, utterly isolated, without means of defence.

" Gentlemen, plenipotentiaries of the German Empire, it is neither the time nor the place for superfluous words. You have before you the accredited plenipotentiaries of all the small and great Powers. . . . "

For a second, Clemenceau paused. Then, like a cataract, the ungovernable passionate desire to burst out and express his real feelings on this one occasion at least—deeply repressed cries of rage and pain dating from the battle-fields of 1870—had its way with him :

" You forced this war upon us ! We shall take good care to prevent it ever happening again. . . . "

He pulled himself up with a superhuman effort. Nothing of this sort was in his draft speech. With immense aplomb he forced himself, without a moment's hesitation, back into the groove he had himself prescribed for this address :

" The time has come when we must settle our accounts. You have asked for peace. We are ready to give you peace. We shall present to you now a book which contains our conditions. You will be given every facility to examine those conditions and the time necessary for it. Everything

will be done with the courtesy that is the privilege of civilized nations. This second Treaty of Versailles has cost too much for us to consider bearing the burden of its consequences alone. To give you my thought completely, you will find us ready to give you any explanation you want, but we must say at the same time that this Peace which we are about to discuss has cost all the nations here assembled too much, and we are unanimously resolved to make use of every means in our power to ensure that we obtain every justifiable satisfaction that is our due. I shall have the honour to acquaint you later with the procedure which it has been approved to adopt for discussion, and if any of the plenipotentiaries present has any observation to offer, he will of course have the right to do so."

The Chairman's address was over. No one stirred in the assembly ; Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, too, sat motionless. But he was eager to reply at once, and raised his hand slightly : " I wish to speak."

Clemenceau was still on his feet. He shook his head : " The translation must be made first ! " He looked about him, and a slight commotion ensued. He called out :

" Translators ! Where are the translators ? "

They stepped forward from the secretaries' table behind the " Council of Four," and the translation began.

The German Foreign Minister sat without moving ; but his mind was made up. In front of him lay two separate sheaves of papers. He had prepared, only the day before, two alternative draft replies to the Chairman's speech. One was for use if Clemenceau kept within the bounds of decency which a defeated enemy, especially a defenceless one, had a right to demand ; it ran as follows :

" The fortune of war has gone against us, and we are ready to accept the conditions for which the preliminary negotiations have furnished the basis. We are prepared to go to the very limit of what is possible, but that limit is

set by the dignity and the vital needs of the German people. We shall examine the document handed to us with goodwill and in the hope that the result of our interview may be subscribed to by all of us."

But this speech was never spoken ; circumstances had made it impossible. The French Prime Minister had not been speaking to the plenipotentiaries of a great nation in tragic eclipse, sent here at the behest of their conquerors to take upon themselves in all good faith the burden of an undeserved heritage, relying on the promise of a better world-order. He had been announcing to prisoners in the dock the hour of their condemnation and punishment. He had charged them with the entire burden of guilt and called upon them to pay the penalty as conscious penitents, although he must be well aware that there could be no possible ground for attributing to Germany, some guilt though she doubtless had, the sole responsibility for all the misfortune which had visited the world in the past four years. Herein lay the inner meaning, the guiding motive of this great tribunal, and Count Rantzau accepted the challenge, firmly relying on the efficacy of a survey of the whole truth, which was Germany's sole salvation. Here, face to face with the whole world, he would speak out the truth, the whole truth as he saw it, in tones that none could disregard. And at the same time he would demonstrate to the emissaries of the whole world that the German Reich, even in defeat, and even if the French Prime Minister demeaned himself, would take no humiliation from anyone. On the way in his car he had asked his right-hand man, Dr. Simons :

" Would you speak standing or sitting ? "

" Well, sir, that is purely a matter of personal taste," Dr. Simons had replied ; " my feeling would be in favour of standing."

For a moment the answer had seemed to displease him ;

then he relapsed into meditation. Now Clemenceau had decided him. If this Peace Conference had not come together for a work of reconciliation, then the fight must go on. The voices of the translators were still filling the room with a monotonous hum. The Foreign Minister turned slightly first to his neighbour on the left, then to the right, and told them his decision in an almost inaudible undertone, asking them to pass the information on :

" The longer speech."

Now the translators had finished, and Dutasta, the Secretary General of the Peace Conference, came down from the " Council of Four," carrying a large, thick, white volume, and walked up to the table where the German delegates were sitting. Addressing Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, he said :

" I have the honour to hand you the conditions for a Peace."

The Foreign Minister rose slightly in his seat, but only for a second. He then sat down again and placed the volume on the table by his side ; without looking at it or opening it. As if lost in thought, he threw his black gloves on to the white cover with a casual gesture, apparently without design. He then selected the more bulky of the two bundles of manuscript and inspected it for a moment through his large horn spectacles with black rims, which sat low down on his nose, while two German translators came up and stood behind him. He began to read :

" Gentlemen, we are deeply impressed with the sublime task which has brought us hither to give a durable peace to the world. We are under no illusion as to the extent of our defeat and the degree of our want of power——"

An interruption came. The French Prime Minister was shouting down into the hall from his seat high up on the opposite side. He did not attempt to control his nerves. He could not understand what the translators were saying.

They had just begun to render the Count's first sentences, which he had delivered in a slightly vibrating but resonant and rhythmic tone. The translators were members of the German delegation, not Frenchmen as was the usual international practice, the French Prime Minister having insisted on the Germans using German interpreters while he had French. Now he complained that he could not understand them. He beckoned excitedly and called out in harsh tones :

" Speak up ! I can't hear a word ! "

The translators raised their voices and repeated what they had said, but Clemenceau was still unable to understand.

" Come nearer," he ordered ; and they came up into the middle of the horseshoe table.

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau continued his speech :

" We know that the power of the German arms is broken. We know the power of the hatred which we encounter here, and we have heard the passionate demand that the victors shall both make us pay as the vanquished, and punish us as the guilty."

His voice gained power and freedom. Now he was completely engrossed in his speech, and the convictions it expressed. He had no eyes for President Wilson, who looked displeased, or for Lloyd George, whose rosy, well-razored face showed more astonishment than anger, perhaps a slight embarrassment. The Three in the Supreme " Council of Four " began to exchange animated comments in a low voice. Wilson, bending his tall body, leaned over to Lloyd George across the French Prime Minister, who was seated between them and whose looks and words did not attempt to conceal his indignation. The President, too, was complaining bitterly of the behaviour of Count Brockdorff-Rantzau. But already the Foreign Minister was beginning again, reading from his manuscript :

" It is demanded of us that we shall confess ourselves to

be the only ones guilty of the war, but such a confession in my mouth would be a lie. We are far from declining any responsibility for this great world war having come to pass and for its having been made in the way in which it was made. The attitude of the former German Government at the Hague Peace Conference, its actions and omissions in the tragic twelve days of July, certainly contributed to the disaster, but we energetically deny that Germany and its people, who were convinced that they were making a war of defence, were alone guilty.

" Nobody will want to contend that the disaster took its course only in the disastrous moment when the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary fell the victim of murderous hands. In the last fifty years the Imperialism of all the European States has chronically poisoned the international situation. The policy of retaliation, the policy of expansion, and the disregard of the rights of peoples to determine their own destiny have contributed to the illness of Europe, which reached its crisis in the world war. The Russian mobilization took from the statesmen the possibility of healing, and gave the decision into the hands of the military powers.

" Public opinion in all the countries of our adversaries is resounding with the crimes which Germany is said to have committed in the war. Here also we are ready to confess the wrong that may have been done. We have not come here to belittle the responsibility of the men who have waged the war politically and militarily, and to deny any crimes which may have been committed against the rights of peoples. We repeat the declaration made in the German Reichstag at the beginning of the war : A wrong has been done to Belgium, and we are willing to repair it.

" But in the manner of making war also Germany is not the only guilty one. Every nation knows of deeds of people which the best nationals only remember with regret. I do

not want to answer by reproaches to reproaches, but I ask them to remember when reparation is demanded not to forget the Armistice. It took six weeks till we got it at last, and six months till we came to know your conditions of peace. Crimes in war may not be excusable, but they are committed in the struggle for victory, and in the defence of national existence, and passions are aroused which make the conscience of peoples blunt. The hundreds of thousands of non-combatants who have perished since the 11th of November by reason of the blockade were killed with cold deliberation after our adversaries had conquered and victory had been assured to them. Think of that when you speak of guilt and of punishment.

" The measure of guilt of all those who have taken part can only be stated by an impartial inquest before a neutral commission, before which all the principal persons of the tragedy are allowed to speak and to whom all the archives are open. We have demanded such an inquest, and we repeat this demand at this Conference, where we stand facing our adversaries alone and without any allies.

" We are not quite without protection. You yourselves have brought us an ally—namely, the right, which is guaranteed by the Treaty, in the principles of the peace. The Allied and Associated Governments forswore in the time between the 5th of October and the 5th of November, 1918, a peace of violence, and wrote " A Peace of Justice " on their banner. On October 5, 1918, the German Government proposed the principles of the President of the United States of North America as the basis of peace, and on the 5th of November, the Secretary of State, Mr. Lansing, declared that the Allied and Associated Powers agreed to this basis, with two definite deviations. The principles of President Wilson have thus become binding for both parties to the war—for you as well as for us, and also for our former allies.

"The various principles demand from us heavy national and economic sacrifices, but the holy fundamental rights of all peoples are protected by this Treaty. The conscience of the world is behind it. There is no nation which might violate it without punishment.

"You will find us ready to examine upon this basis the preliminary peace which you have proposed to us, with a firm intention of rebuilding in common with you that which has been destroyed, and of repairing any wrong done to Belgium—any wrong that may have been committed—principally the wrong to Belgium, and to show to mankind new aims of political and social progress.

"Considering the tremendous number of problems which arise, we ought as soon as possible to make an examination of the principal tasks by special commissions of experts on the basis of the Treaty which you have proposed to us. In this it will be our chief task to re-establish the devastated vigour of mankind and of all the people who have taken part by an international protection of the life, health, and liberty of the working classes.

"As our next aim I consider the reconstruction of the territories of Belgium and of Northern France, which have been occupied by us, and which have been destroyed by war. To do so, we have taken upon ourselves a solemn obligation, and we are resolved to execute it to the extent which will have been agreed upon between us. In this task we cannot do without the co-operation of our former adversaries. We cannot accomplish the work without the technical and financial participation of the victorious peoples, and you cannot execute it without us. Impoverished Europe must desire that the reconstruction should be fulfilled with the greatest success and with as little delay as is in any way possible. This desire can only be fulfilled by a clear understanding about the best methods to be employed. It would be the very worst method to go

on and have the work done by German prisoners of war Certainly this work is cheap, but it would cost the world dear if hatred and despair should seize the German people when they consider that their brothers and sons and fathers who are prisoners are kept prisoners beyond the preliminary peace doing the former penal work. Without any immediate solution of this question, which has been drawn out too long, we cannot come to a durable peace Our experts of both sides will have to examine how the German people may come up to their financial obligations to repair without succumbing under the heavy burden A crash would bereave those who have a right to reparation of the advantages to which they have a claim, and would draw after it an irretrievable disaster of the whole European economic system. The vanquishers as well as the vanquished people must guard against this menacing danger with its incalculable consequences.

" There is only one means of banishing it—unlimited confession of the economical and social solidarity of all peoples in the free and all-comprising League of Nations Gentlemen, the sublime thought to be derived from the most terrible disaster in the history of mankind is the League of Nations ; the greatest progress in the development of mankind has been pronounced and will make its way. Only if the gates of the League of Nations are thrown open to all who are of goodwill can the aim be attained and only then the dead of this war will not have died in vain.

" The German people in their hearts are ready to take upon themselves their heavy lot if the bases of peace which have been established are not any more shaken. The peace which cannot be defined in the name of right before the world always calls forth new resistances against it. Nobody will be capable of subscribing to it with a good conscience for it will not be possible of fulfilment. Nobody could take

upon himself the guarantee of its execution, which ought to lie in its signature.

"We shall examine the document handed to us with goodwill and in the hope that the final result of our interview may be subscribed to by all of us."

The German Foreign Minister had spoken, enunciating the final sentences with slow, quiet emphasis. The translators completed their rendering. Now the act of State, the judicial act for which the company had assembled, was at an end. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau rose, the whole room rose, and the German delegates walked over to the glass door, back through the long corridor, over the ringing stone flags which they had traversed on their way to the meeting. Once more hidden onlookers peered at them through half-opened doors and windows, from cloak-rooms, bar, and smoking-rooms, and footmen peeped from between the mirrors.

The secretaries of the German delegation brought up the rear. They collected their coats, their soft hats, which caused the French journalists much amusement, and their umbrellas. The bustle of the departure lasted some little time.

On the steps leading to the gardens stood Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, waiting for his staff, leaning on his ebony walking-stick, a slim black silhouette, with pale, calm, self-controlled features above a tall white collar. His glance, reserved and haughty, ignored the photographers, the officers, and the guard of honour. He was alone among the crowd whose curiosity besieged him. His mien spoke of sorrow mixed with contempt as he gazed into space—remote, inaccessible. Between his lips, which trembled ever so slightly, he held a cigarette which he had lighted nonchalantly as he went down the steps beneath the portico of the Trianon Palace Hotel.

CHAPTER XV

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE PEACE TREATY

The instrument of the Peace Treaty, a book of over three hundred pages in parallel columns—on the left the French, on the right the English version—became forthwith the object of intensive study on the part of the German delegation. The whole of the enormous text, the actual number of words in which had already formed an impressive feature in reports sent by American correspondents to their papers, was transmitted to the German Government during the night of May 7–8 on the private wireless installation of the German delegation, and meanwhile Dr. Simons prepared a detailed programme for the rapid systematic survey of the whole of the Treaty under various sub-divisions according to subject matter. The one copy handed to the Foreign Minister was, of course, insufficient, and Dr. Simons preferred an urgent request for several more copies immediately after the formal ceremony. He received these the same evening, and the volumes were then dissected and handed in parts to the translators, who set to work with feverish haste.

The work of translation lasted from the moment the plenipotentiaries returned to the Hôtel des Réservoirs from the meeting in the Trianon Palace Hotel up to the middle of the following night. To avoid the loss of a single minute, the text was handed out to the various committees almost sheet by sheet. Three main committees, corresponding to the threefold composition of the Delegation as arranged by Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, were appointed to

examine the peace terms under the general direction and control of the Foreign Minister himself. All the political and military questions were allotted to one group of experts for examination and comment, Secretary of State von Haniel on the political side and General von Seeckt on the military side being responsible for the co-ordination and control, under the Foreign Minister, of this committee's work. A sub-committee was appointed to report on the treatment of the war guilt question in the Treaty. A second main group was formed to deal with all economic problems under the chairmanship of Herr von Stockhammern, and this again found itself obliged, in view of the range and importance of the questions to be covered, to appoint several sub-committees, of which the chief was the Finance Committee under Herr Max Warburg, the banker. The third main group summarized and reported on the enemy attitude toward labour legislation and social questions, and was presided over by Herr Giesberts, assisted by the labour leader Herr Legien. Dr. Simons reserved to himself the task of preparing a comprehensive memorandum on the conclusions and final attitude and judgment of the first main committee.

Forty-eight hours elapsed before even a preliminary general survey could be made of the substance and tendency of the Treaty, which, it must be remembered, had remained up to that moment a complete secret to the German plenipotentiaries, both as regards the arrangement and selection of its materials and the spirit of its demands, big and small. On the very first reading, the linguists among the delegates had been struck by an inexplicable vagueness, ambiguity, or ruggedness of the French text, usually a model of clarity and precision, and also by apparent mutual inconsistencies between various conditions, or between certain conditions and actual facts. But such impressions, anyhow of doubtful reliability on a first hurried perusal, were disregarded for the present.

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's first and immediate concern was to get the total impression, the general picture as it appeared to the various committees, with a view to forming a considered judgment on the Treaty as a whole, which he was meanwhile carefully studying for himself. This judgment, when it came, was annihilating.

The Foreign Minister summoned a special meeting of the chairmen of all committees on the evening of May 9. It began just after 8 p.m., and lasted far into the night. It was confined to an exchange of views on the main aspects only, each chapter of the Treaty being surveyed in broad outline. But every group had already formed the same opinion, which was expressed by the chairman with warm indignation and resolute determination to reject the whole of the terms. Each speaker only added in quick succession further details that reinforced the disconsolate picture painted by the colleagues who preceded him. Every one of the experts took the view that what the enemy was proposing or demanding, or rather dictating, was totally unacceptable, and all voted for declaring that it was impossible to sign such a Treaty.

The Foreign Minister himself had gained the same impression of the terms. As he put it:

"This fat volume was quite unnecessary. They could have expressed the whole thing more simply in one clause—'*L'Allemagne renonce à son existence.*'"

One of the delegates moved that they should give their answer by straightway leaving Versailles. This proposition was supported by most of the others; in hot resentment they advocated a complete and immediate breaking off of the negotiations and departure for Germany. Some, however, counselled moderation, and all looked to Count Brockdorff-Rantzau for his decision. The Foreign Minister had in mind all the attempts that the French Premier had made to humiliate him only forty-eight hours ago. It had

COUNT BROCKDORFF-RANTZAU LEAVING THE TRIANON PALACE AFTER THE SITTING OF MAY 7, 1919

been plain that no leniency was to be expected from the Peace Terms. Yet much of Germany's future welfare depended on what concessions he could wrest from an obdurate enemy by means of an adroit technique of negotiation. He announced his decision : they would not go yet. He would try once more to get into touch with the enemy and open up negotiations.

This at least had the effect of keeping up the delegates' courage and maintaining a scintilla of hope. They dispersed at 3 a.m.

On that same day Count Rantzau sent a memorandum to the Chairman of the Peace Conference saying that a first cursory examination of the peace terms had already brought to light demands " beyond endurance for any nation." Further, his experts would bring evidence to prove that many of the provisions of the Treaty were actually incapable of fulfilment. He would transmit to the Peace Conference as quickly as possible all the necessary remarks and data in support of these contentions.

The Foreign Minister was well aware that he could not hope to modify all the harshnesses and enormities in the terms, but he was determined somehow, if necessary by stratagem or by some indirect means, to force a discussion, at any rate, of the most painful and mortifying among them. The French Premier replied in a few terse, frigid phrases :

" The representatives of the Allied and Associated Powers cannot enter into any sort of discussion regarding their right to maintain the chief provisions of the Treaty in the form in which they are now drawn up. They can only take note of any practical suggestions which the German plenipotentiaries may have to place before them."

Count Rantzau carefully ignored the first sentence of this memorandum and seized on the opening which, in spite of it, the second sentence gave. If " practical suggestions " were admitted, then some reference would be

possible to all the most important points. Within the next four and a half weeks the various committees of the German delegation put into the form of " suggestions " seventeen Notes. To begin with, enlightenment was requested on certain obscurities in the sections dealing with the League of Nations. It was not apparent why Germany should be called upon to subscribe to the Statutes of such a League if she were to be entirely excluded from it. Information was desired whether this exclusion was merely a temporary one and whether the possibility of Germany's subsequent entry into the League would be safeguarded. And since the Foreign Minister was sending this Note on the subject of the League of Nations, he ventured to append, as they were sure to contain here and there a few practical suggestions, the carefully considered detailed proposals which he had already had prepared on a world-wide Association of Peoples. His policy was to select for treatment in the first instance the less thorny points among the immense number of provisions which involved acute hardship. Following his remarks on the League of Nations, he went on to deal with Labour Legislation, for it was only natural that the representative of a new Germany freed from her old, formidable militarist basis, should be primarily concerned with the peaceable, everyday pursuits of humanity. From Workers' Rights under the new régime he turned to the alleviation of the hardships of the German prisoners. Only after all these matters had been dealt with did he approach the subjects of war guilt, economic matters, and cessions of territory, the bitterest chapters following the loss of the war, which had condemned Germany to utter impotence and, if the victors thought fit, to the denial of all justice.

The Notes were presented at intervals of a very few days. Two each were devoted to the questions of Labour Legislation and War Prisoners. They were all courteously phrased,

concise and to the point, constantly supported by references to the definite agreement which had been entered into by the two groups of belligerents, after the acceptance on both sides of the Wilson programme, in order to bring hostilities to an end and frame a peace. Amongst the conditions included in the Peace Treaty which had been handed to them, the German plenipotentiaries had discovered infringements of that agreement and interpretations which were in direct opposition to it. As the Chairman of the Conference, perhaps for this very reason, declined to allow any negotiation or discussion of the Peace document, the Germans were all the more intent on challenging those contraventions of the agreement within the limits of the " suggestions " which they were permitted to make. They had no intention of appealing to the enemy's clemency, or of trading on their weakness. They claimed their share of the Justice which had been proclaimed as the right of every nation. The demands contained in the Peace Treaty were almost entirely at variance with what the President of the United States had promised in his sketch of the coming World Peace. But it was that promise of his which formed the basis of the compact, and in their " suggestions " the German plenipotentiaries merely claimed for Germany the honouring of the undertakings given in the agreement of November 1918. Since the President of the United States had stood surety for those undertakings, the Peace Conference could not, so the Germans argued, possibly revoke them.

Clemenceau clearly differed. In the first place, he seemed entirely to deny that the peace terms contravened the Wilson programme. The Germans knew nothing of the struggles that had taken place between Clemenceau and Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George, Clemenceau and the two together. No one then knew how very serious these struggles had been, and this might never have come to light in view of the final agreement between the three ;

even if it had, it might have made no difference to the Treaty now that they had set their hands to it. In the second place, Clemenceau had not the slightest intention of embarking on any discussions on the subject now that all power was in his hands.

He replied to the German Notes with elaborate courtesy. The committees of the German delegation had prepared each of their Notes under the greatest pressure, often almost overnight, and the Chairman of the Conference took care to ensure that, though his own staff could not compete in zeal to that extent, the replies should reach the Germans at latest within ten days. But he made no real concessions. When the German plenipotentiaries put forward proposals touching the League of Nations, the moral implications of the Treaty and the possibility of improving on them, the French Prime Minister replied that in this opinion " the provisions of the Peace Treaty were much more practical and suitable." When the Germans, in their League of Nations scheme, suggested the creation of " Conciliation Commissions " which should intervene—without prejudice to the overriding authority of the International Court of Justice—in cases of dispute, and institute an enquiry, the Chairman of the Conference regarded it as the greatest of concessions when in his reply he stated that " there is nothing in the wording of the Peace Treaty which prohibits the employment of Commissions of the kind suggested." The prevailing tone of the Notes sent out from the Conference was that of a supreme World Court which has laid down an impeccable set of regulations for the universe and is determined that they shall be enforced without any variation.

Moreover, the formal politeness of his replies did not prevent the Chairman from bringing in here and there sentences, mostly the work of Clemenceau's drafting secretary, Mandel, which reminded the German delegates once again of the position in which they were placed, and the

German nation with them. They not only had to sign without a murmur whatever the " Supreme Council of Four " had devised and approved ; they must also, since they insisted on this entirely superfluous exchange of Notes, sit in the dock, as they had done at the first big meeting in the Trianon Palace Hotel, and swallow continual doses of moral correction and snubs. The Notes sent by the Chairman of the Conference boasted of the wisdom of the " Allied and Associated Democracies, which have had a very long experience of democratic institutions," from which it followed without further need of explanation that the German proposals on Labour Legislation could contain nothing that was not already much better arranged in the Peace Treaty. When the Germans referred to " special measures of social reform," the Chairman in his next refusal took care not to omit to assert that "such measures could and would undoubtedly have been put into effect already if Germany's wanton attack had not diverted the efforts and thoughts of the whole world away from such preoccupations to the struggle for freedom, and so compelled the other nations to subordinate their efforts for new ideals to the defence of their independence." The German Foreign Minister had to summon all his self-command and imperturbability not to let the attacks and the aggressivenesses of his opponent make him forget the object he was so painfully pursuing.

Occasionally, when the French Prime Minister went beyond mere insistence on the terms and tried to support them by charges which were neither logical nor founded on facts, he would give back blow for blow. When, for example, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau demanded equality of treatment as regards the release of prisoners of war, pointed out that Germany had set free unconditionally even those accused of criminal or other offences, and claimed that similar standards should apply to both sides, the Chairman of the Peace Conference replied in a Note which included

the following passage : " Since there is no possible comparison between the German Government's treatment of its prisoners and that of the Allied and Associated Governments, no equality of treatment in this respect can be claimed." It was a great deal for the Chairman to make up his mind to cite actual cases in proof of his charges, but on the question of the conviction of prisoners abroad for criminal offences he did so, and gave particulars of how a German soldier had murdered a French farmer with a pruning-knife. But the Foreign Minister was prompt in his rejoinder. He demanded the appointment of a Commission to investigate the whole question of the treatment of prisoners of war, and, as a pendant to the story of the pruning-knife, he was able to give the following statistics : " Among the released prisoners belonging to one of the Allied and Associated Powers there were seven men who had been guilty of murder during their imprisonment and one hundred and fifty-five who had been convicted of offences against morality, particularly rape and the violation of children. One of the worst cases was that of Private Emile Viulleques, of the 35th French Infantry Regiment, who killed an old German peasant woman with a hatchet." The German delegation had other information besides. A copy of a letter they had received was enclosed for the Chairman's information :

" St. Étienne du Rouvray,
" Near Rouen
" (Seine Inférieure),
" *February* 15, 1919.

" Sir,—Please excuse us for writing to you. We are wives of men who have been called up for military service, and we should like to tell you what is going on in our town of St. Étienne. The German prisoners employed on the railway here are treated like convicts, beaten like

dogs, and not given enough to eat. It is heartbreaking for us wives and mothers of soldiers to see these men dying of hunger. Although we ourselves are short of bread we cannot help throwing them some now and then when we have a chance. They pounce on it like famished animals. The French warders treat them brutally, just on account of a bit of bread. Sir, we hope you will take steps to improve their lot. We have already written to several Departments about it, but unfortunately without any result.

"Yours truly,
"A Group of Working Women
in St. Étienne du Rouvray."

The Chairman of the Peace Conference did not continue the correspondence on this sentimental topic, nor did he modify his attitude on the question. He cared nothing for protests, whether supported by facts or not. If the German plenipoteniaries did not like his expressing his real opinions about them and their country and their claims even in the polished style he had hitherto adopted, he could just as well say nothing. The stubbornness of his peasant ancestors came out here. He was accustomed to express himself more forcibly as a rule, but he was reluctant to let himself go in a correspondence conducted not only for himself, but on behalf of Allies. In the circumstances his silence was sufficiently telling.

The whole exchange of Notes had been, up to now, a struggle without result, and hence without meaning. Of course, the German Foreign Minister was not solely concerned for social reform when he devoted two Notes to proposals regarding Labour Legislation, while still more important, or at any rate more obvious, matters seemed to be calling for settlement. He had other ends to serve as well. He wanted to bring into the peace negotiations the powerful voice of the organized Labour Movement of the

whole world. He had hopes that, if an International Trades Union Congress could be got together at Versailles to discuss, first of all the sections of the Treaty affecting the workers, and later perhaps other topics, while the Conference was sitting, the enemy might be forced to set some bounds to their conscienceless violence. He himself was neither unfamiliar nor on bad terms with the Labour movement, and he did not despair even of getting into touch indirectly with the French section, whose voice, if they too raised a protest against all this trampling on justice, could not be disregarded by the Congress. But Clemenceau thwarted this scheme too. He rejected the proposal to convene an international Labour organization at Versailles which would confer and report on legislation affecting the workers of all countries. " There is no country," Clemenceau wrote in reply to Count Rantzau, " in which the workers would at present be prepared to submit meekly to legislation imposed upon them by representatives of other countries. It is clear, therefore, that international pacts of the nature visualized by the Peace Treaty would be more effective in present circumstances than actual international labour legislation."

More than that : the Chairman of the Peace Conference countered the German plan by extolling the patriotism of the French working classes. Whether he was justified in his faith may be open to doubt. But at all events, he had the power of preventing any invitation, or any possible attempt, of the French Labour movement to intervene in the events taking place at Versailles. He held the trumps at every deal. And at every stage, in order to deter possible intercessors and to represent the excessive demands of the Peace Treaty as legitimate severity, he observed towards the German plenipotentiaries the icy formality with which even convicted criminals are treated. There was to be no appeal from this conviction—neither from without nor from within. Germany had been pronounced guilty. She had herself

admitted her guilt by the agreement of November 5, 1918, and the Peace Treaty was only repeating this acknowledgment in set terms in the Section on Reparations. Evil doers who had been overpowered had no right to raise claims. They had only to hear judgment passed and to sign their names to it.

The German Foreign Minister, who from the outset of his task had kept his attention fixed on the central issue from which all the enemy's demands and exactions proceeded, very soon realized that he would make no progress along these lines and that his Notes were of merely minor importance, besides offering no hope of success, so long as he had not challenged and disposed of that central issue. He came back to the question of War Guilt. Everything hung on that. He determined to pursue the discussion.

The German Delegation knew that the Peace Conference had appointed a secret committee to study the question of war guilt, of the responsibility of various individuals for the outbreak of war and for certain measures carried out during the war, and to report on the feasibility of demanding the surrender of those alleged to be guilty and bringing them before an international Court of Justice. The Conference attached particular importance to this latter problem, and Lloyd George especially had been constantly referring in his public speeches to the prospect of giving effect to one exemplary solution of it, namely the surrender of the German Emperor, William II, and his trial before a Court which would establish the blame for everything that had happened in the eyes of the whole world. It was inevitable that the Conference should attach the greatest importance to the labours and conclusions of such a committee ; not only did the French Prime Minister need its support to lend an air of justice to his demands for revenge, compensation, and other unjustifiable benefits for France, but France's allies and friends needed it just as much for their moral comfort if they were to look on and see the sort of treatment

that was meted out to Germany. In any case, the Peace Conference had laid it down that all the sin, and hence all the atonement, lay with Germany, and, since might was on their side, they need not necessarily condescend to go into details. If, however, this special committee could adduce incontrovertible evidence of German culpability and German responsibility, collective and individual, then the moral basis of the Conference would indeed be improved. The Committee received instructions to proceed with the greatest possible speed and to report their findings urgently to the " Council of Four."

News of this investigation by a committee under the directions of the Peace Conference had reached the German plenipotentiaries in confidence about the middle of May. They learned more than the bare fact that the special committee was in being ; they learned particulars of its report, or at least of certain important parts of it. The American experts on the committee had given their opinion that, while no one could deny that an enormous power of decision rested with the Kaiser at the time of the outbreak of the war, it would be juridically impossible to fasten on to him the sole responsibility for the war and to demand his extradition and prosecute him. The Japanese experts would not hear of any such thing. If it were established that a once powerful monarch could be haled before the Courts, it was not impossible that circumstances might arise one day in which the same fate might be proposed and put into execution for the Mikado himself. For them the monarch stood high above all responsibility, and they were apprehensive lest the royal immunity should be called in question.

Thus the special committee had not made a great deal of progress with its labours. The question of the Kaiser's extradition was dropped. This development reacted not altogether favourably on the scheme for laying the whole of the blame on Germany. The minutes of the special

committee went before the " Council of Four," but no new or incontrovertible data could be gleaned from them. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau was well primed with information as to the investigation and its outcome. He advanced to the attack.

But although his entourage, his confidants, his wholehearted supporter and lieutenant, Dr. Simons, all his colleagues in the delegation in fact, shared his views on this point as on others, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's position was nevertheless that of a lonely, hard-pressed outpost. He had already brought up the question of war guilt once, in the Trianon Palace Hotel, under provocation from Clemenceau, but this had been on his own initiative, in the resentful feeling that he could not simply let the adversary in Versailles behave as though he were passing sentence on an evil-doer who was contritely presenting himself for judgment. After the French Prime Minister had spoken in the tone he had thought fit to adopt, it had been necessary to tell him that on his side too they had much to reproach themselves with, and that Count Rantzau was not going to admit that any legal justification for a policy of violence could be based on unproven charges. There had perhaps been complaints about his attitude in the council chamber of the " Four," but he had not been the first to open this subject, which he had foreseen would be the fundamental basis of the whole of the peace terms. It was naturally awkward for the enemy that he had taken up Clemenceau's challenge and turned it into a weapon of defence. It would suit them better, no doubt, if the Germans let the matter rest.

But it was not only from the " Council of Four " that complaints arose that Count Brockdorff-Rantzau did not accept all responsibility for Germany without a murmur. Complaints came from Germany herself—or, rather, from the German Government. Telegrams from Berlin on the

wisdom of opening up a debate on war guilt had begun to pour in soon after the day on which the Foreign Minister had made his big speech at the handing over of the peace terms. Not that the Berlin Cabinet were any less horrified on reading the text of the Treaty, which they had before them in a hastily prepared translation containing an imposing number of howlers, than Count Rantzau and his experts had been after their first cursory glance at the document. President Ebert and the Prime Minister, Philipp Scheidemann, had addressed the crowd from the windows of the Chancellor's Palace: " let the hand wither " which should sign such a dictated peace. They were determined to resist. But the Cabinet and the peace delegation did not see entirely eye to eye as to the best methods of dealing with the enemy's demands. Erzberger offered constant and vigorous opposition to the idea of going into the question of war guilt at Versailles. He was to a large extent justified in regarding the Armistice agreement as his work, and he saw this agreement menaced if embittered discussions on the one topic of responsibility for the war should destroy the whole fabric of peace.

About a fortnight after he had signed the Armistice agreement in the Bois de Compiègne the first two diplomatic representatives of France since the war had arrived in the German capital. These were Professors Haguenin and Hesnard, both by scientific training Germanists, Haguenin having been for many years a professor at the Berlin University, and both perfect masters of the German language. They had been sent to Germany by President Poincaré and Clemenceau as " observers " to report, pending the appointment of a French chargé d'affaires, on all they could glean of the new atmosphere in that country, of its inward feelings and development, of the really controlling forces and motives, of which neither the Paris Government nor the Peace Conference had any clear

conception. The two professors soon got into touch with Erzberger, much to the gratification of both sides—of the Frenchmen because by this means they were able to obtain information more easily as to the feelings and proceedings of the Cabinet and of the whole of Germany, otherwise only a seething, inchoate mass for them ; of the German Minister still more, because some faint ray of enlightenment on the enemy's intentions in Versailles might now and then be obtainable through the French emissaries, particularly as Professor Haguenin was known to be in direct and confidential correspondence with Clemenceau. The German delegation got no direct news at all of the plans or doings of the other side. The German Cabinet's information was limited to the reports received from its plenipotentiaries. But Erzberger now had a bridge leading direct to France, and he was in effect the sole recipient of information of any sort from France, even if only through the two " observers " as intermediaries. He regarded this channel as of great importance, as, in fact, it was to some extent, and he certainly succeeded in impressing the rest of the Cabinet with a sense of the importance of his conversations with the two Frenchmen.

Matthias Erzberger was a man of restless activity, with a vivid, rapidly working imagination, starting from practical details, but apt to carry him on to higher and higher flights, so that he saw the ultimate result of his aims more clearly than the difficulties in the way of their execution. He was ambitious, with the honest conviction that he was heading entirely in the right direction and could see the path in advance of others. But he was inspired by a sincere desire to rehabilitate the fallen fortunes of Germany at the earliest possible moment, to put an end to the long years of terrible suffering, and, above all, to bring peace, after his first success, as he saw it, in engineering the Armistice agreement. And as, with all this, he displayed

an immense power of concentrated industry and unending resourcefulness, the two Frenchmen found him a stimulating personality of constant interest, bubbling over with ideas and an eloquent flood of exposition. They listened attentively to the Minister's scheme for reconstruction in Belgium and Northern France on a grandiose scale. Imaginatively he pictured the ruined towns, the whole regions of destruction and wreckage, already rebuilt by armies of German workmen. Everything, as he conceived it, was brand new and far finer than it had ever been before. The most up-to-date technical methods were to be employed, electric power was to be the most prominent feature, the contracts were to be divided between the French and German industrialists, and the whole work supervised and directed by a special French Commission of Control. All parties concerned would be benefited : the devastated countryside, the German workers, the industrial interests, and—so far as contracts were entrusted to German firms—the Reparation fund, which would reap substantial cash remittances.

The two Frenchmen listened, and Professor Haguenin may have written to Paris about the scheme. In any case, he had no reason to be anything but polite to Herr Erzberger, who was untiring in his display of goodwill and of dazzling oratory. The professor seemed to be inclined to share the view that it was time all these regrettable misunderstandings ceased between two great nations. He had no doubt that some day in the future a complete and lasting reconciliation would ensue. Nor did he seem to think that everything need be taken quite so tragically as the peace terms made it out at present. Drafting demands, signing their acceptance, and carrying them out were three stages divided by the flowing stream of time. Leniency might later on be allowed to come into play, and there would surely be some change later on

from the present meticulous insistence on the accurate pound of flesh. Whether it would help leniency along its slow road to be obstructive at Versailles, to make difficulties, to haggle over points of legality, when the only thing that counted in the slightest was force—that was another question. Professor Haguenin could well imagine that it might be best to give way at present and gain all the more later from the ready indulgence of the ex-enemy. Erzberger at once saw the force of the professor's argument, though it was only thrown out in quite general terms. As a Roman Catholic and leader of the Centre Party, he found an inward satisfaction in the application of the ideas of repentance and expiation, forgiveness and the redemption and future reward of the penitent. Fresh from these discussions with the French " observers," he went to the Cabinet and represented the substance of what he had heard, which no one could check, as a reasonably well-founded political forecast. Believing in these hypotheses as he did, his imagination saw them hardened into future facts, and he displayed them to his Cabinet colleagues as confidential communications for the genuineness of which he was ready to vouch. At all events they served as reasons for not wanting the German plenipotentiaries at Versailles to deal tactlessly with the question of war guilt. How could the enemy ever forgive if they were met merely with pig-headedness ? Nothing could be gained in the existing condition of utter defeat by attempts to show defiance.

The Cabinet wavered. Notwithstanding Erzberger's inferences and arguments, a number of the Ministers viewed any prophecies of lenience with scepticism. But these reports of Erzberger's interviews with the two Frenchmen were the only news that they had. It was certainly sound policy not to irritate the enemy, and perhaps the argument about Guilty or Not Guilty was, after all, only a bit of moralizing. All the other questions in the Peace Treaty

were of greater importance. Finally Erzberger's influence began to prevail. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau must be told to drop this delicate subject. The Cabinet started sending telegrams. However their wording varied, their message was unchanging, only sent in more and more urgent tones : the question of War Guilt was not to be discussed at all.

Viewing the question, however, from Versailles, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau did not regard it as merely a bit of moralizing. He saw behind it a number of things that the enemy would only have the courage to demand when Germany had been convicted of sole guilt. He, as Foreign Minister, was responsible for conducting Germany's policy in regard to foreign countries. Thrown on his own resources to defend his country, only he, here at Versailles, could be the judge of his technique and tactics, and no one else. He took no notice of the directions from Berlin. If the work he was doing did not meet with the approval of the Government, let the President recall him.

He instructed Dr. Simons to prepare the memorandum on War Guilt which had been decided on.

The Allies' justification for making Germany shoulder the obligation to make good all damage caused by the war, whether to territory, industrial plant, or private property, was contained in one single sentence of the Treaty :

" The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies."

In a Note dated May 13, Dr. Simons nailed to the counter that prime misconception which had led, through this apodeictically proclaimed accusation of Germany, together with the suggestion that Germany had already acknowledged, in November 1918, the truth and justice of

that accusation, to the imposition of an apparently unlimited penance for the whole German nation. He protested against the assumption "that the alleged responsibility of the former German Government for the outbreak of the war should be regarded as justifying a right or claim on the part of the Allied and Associated Governments to compensation from Germany for the losses they sustained during the war." He asserted that there was a misunderstanding, in that Germany had never admitted responsibility for the war. The declaration referred to by the Peace Conference had been made in November 1918, before any discussion had taken place regarding the responsibility for the war. This was an attempt to make the new, democratized Germany do penance for the ethical and other errors of a previous Government, now superseded, regardless of the fact that such a course was inconsistent with the spirit of the Wilsonian basis of peace.

He did not mean it to be inferred that Germany was entirely blameless for the events of 1914. But for one thing, Germany was not alone to blame, and secondly, she had not been the worst offender. The Peace Conference had, he understood, appointed a "Commission for investigating the responsibilities of the authors of the war." The German plenipotentiaries did not shrink from a full discussion of this subject, and requested to be furnished with a copy of the report of that Commission.

Clemenceau replied once more with frigid politeness, and this time claimed to give chapter and verse for the German acknowledgment of responsibility. The attempts to avoid the admission of guilt could only, he said, be explained by consciousness of guilt. Germany had recognized clearly in November 1918 that it was for her only to make good the damage caused by her "attack by land and sea and in the air." It was too late now for her to attempt to repudiate the blame.

As regards the liability of the new Germany for the sins of the previous Government, Germany had not asked the French Republic in 1871 whether it was willing to answer for the misdeeds of Imperial France or not. At Brest Litovsk, too, the Germans had insisted on the new Russia accepting terms which constituted a punishment of Tsarism. The French Prime Minister did not deny that a Commission appointed by the Peace Conference had been investigating the question of War Guilt, but he pointed out that proceedings within the Allied camp did not concern the German delegation, and still less confidential reports called for by the " Council of Four."

The Chairman of the Peace Conference had taken a week to reply. Four days later the German Foreign Minister signed a further rejoinder on the subject of responsibility for war damages. In this Note Dr. Simons had endeavoured to bring out with special emphasis the critical fact of Clemenceau's wholesale confusion of thought. Germany had acknowledged at the time of the Armistice in November 1918 that she had been guilty at the commencement of the war of an offence against international law in invading a neutral country, Belgium, and laying it waste with war. This was the " aggression " for the consequence of which Germany had acknowledged herself responsible. The Chairman of the Peace Conference was twisting this acknowledged liability for a single illegal act into a recognition by Germany of authorship of and sole guilt for the world war. He had arbitrarily extended the admission of responsibility by the German Government in November 1918, and now asserted that the Germans had subscribed to that extended interpretation at the time, and that it was therefore a matter long ago disposed of. The original declaration had employed the expression " attack," meaning by this the invasion of Belgium ; the Prime Minister had substituted the word " war " for the word

" attack." He was now anxious to prevent further investigation of this confusion of thought, but the German delegation insisted on this investigation being carried out. It was an attempt to get behind what the President of the United States had proclaimed in his resounding messages in his attempt to reconcile the nations of the world : No annexations, no penal indemnities—no act of vengeance of any kind. " The German delegation," said Dr. Simons, " is loth to interpret your Excellency's words as meaning that the promises of the Allied and Associated Governments on that occasion were only a *ruse de guerre* to weaken the resistance of the German people, and that those promises are now to be withdrawn."

Over and above the attempt now being made by this Peace Conference to dislodge one of the corner-stones of the settlement defined by the President of the United States, the French Prime Minister had been guilty, according to the German legal experts, of a palpable piece of trickery. He had built up certain arguments and conclusions from premises which were non-existent and had only been created by himself for his own purposes. If the " attack by land and sea and in the air " referred to in November 1918 meant the attack on Belgium, then only the damage caused to Belgium had to be made good ; except that as the infringement of international law had consisted in marching through Belgium to Northern France, the same obligation applied to the latter district. If, on the other hand, the " attack " meant the same thing as " war," then reparations were due to Belgium, France, Italy, Roumania, Serbia, Montenegro—in short, to every country on whose soil a single German soldier had set foot. Thus the question of War Guilt was by no means merely a bit of moralizing ; an immense burden for Germany's future depended on a correct interpretation of the problem. The second German Note repeated the request for the report of

the special commission on war responsibility. It protested against the deliberate misrepresentations of the French Prime Minister and against the resulting confusion of ideas, for which he was responsible. It demanded, finally, to be informed on what the Peace Conference based their suggestion that Germany was alone to blame, seeing that no evidence was adduced to prove the statement and that the German nation had never accepted such blame. The German Note concluded by reserving the right to deal specially again on some future occasion with this important subject.

The new Note on War Guilt produced no apparent effect on the Peace Conference. But a few days later in Berlin confidential enquiries were made of the ex-Ambassador Count Wolf-Metternich as to " whether he would be prepared if the occasion arose to take charge of the negotiations at Versailles."

" This enquiry is meaningless," replied the Count, " unless there is some intention of superseding Count Rantzau. But I am in entire agreement with the attitude he has taken up."

Fourteen days after the formal handing over of the Terms of Peace, Count Rantzau saw clearly that it would be entirely impracticable to complete his task at Versailles within the time-limit of fifteen days set by the Chairman of the Peace Conference. He had barely been able to have rough memoranda prepared on the most important and far-reaching of the problems covered by the Treaty, and even these had been far from exhaustively drawn up or put into final shape. He had made some slight reference to the subject of territorial surrenders, to the sections in which they were ordered to hand over Alsace-Lorraine, the Saar district, Eupen and Malmedy, Prussian Moresnet, parts of Silesia, Posen, West and East Prussia, but the German plenipotentiaries had not been able to do more than touch superficially on all these territorial problems.

To deal adequately with each would mean the marshalling of facts and figures with regard to each. The time-limit suggested, a fortnight, would be totally insufficient, even if the various committees worked at the most extreme pressure, for a conscientious examination of this world rearrangement and the expression of a considered opinion on it. On May 20 Count Rantzau requested the Chairman to extend the limit to enable him to deal with the many complicated problems that still remained. In addition to six separate Notes on important points which he had in hand, he announced to the Peace Conference that he was about to submit a " summary of the comments which the German Government has been led to express on various detailed conditions included in the draft Peace Treaty." The Foreign Minister intended this " summary of comments " to be the decisive, full German reply to the demands of the Peace Conference. The Notes and rejoinders hitherto prepared were no more than preliminary spade-work to define and illuminate the various themes. His idea was now to expatiate in a long covering memorandum on the general legal basis on which alone a Peace Treaty between Germany and her enemies could be framed. In this covering letter, the general summary, he intended to rehearse, with precise documentation, all the actual points in which the peace terms conflicted with the agreed bases of the Wilson programme. This would be supported in the main body of the Note by the more detailed reports of his experts, arranged according to subject matter and as thorough as circumstances would permit. Concurrently with this critical material he would offer constructive suggestions for reasonable methods of procedure, compromises, conciliatory measures, and so on. But for this he would need time. The French Prime Minister's answer came promptly : " Another week."

This covering letter was the one big opportunity, and

also the last chance that was left, of securing better terms for Germany from the Peace Conference, or of representing certain of the problems in such a way that the Allies would be forced to sit down and listen to verbal arguments. Determined as the Foreign Minister was to retain full independence for his attitude and actions at Versailles, this last great step was of such importance and involved such far-reaching consequences in its acceptances or refusals that it was essential to carry the Cabinet with him in his proposed line of action. The necessities of administrative procedure, too, made it inevitable that he should consult his colleagues, since the opinions of experts in Berlin had to be obtained on certain points of detail. Apart from that, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau had a feeling, which amounted to a certainty, that the Cabinet in Berlin was divided in its appreciation of his work and plans. The Cabinet raised no objection to the preparation and presentation of a comprehensive " covering letter " ; on the contrary, they even contributed a draft of their own, embodying their idea of the kind of general reply which should be made to the Peace Conference. The draft, which covered all the chief problems, had been prepared by Erzberger and his staff with that extraordinary speed with which he was always capable when necessary of despatching special work.

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau studied the Berlin draft with close attention, but quickly came to the conclusion, which was also formed independently by the experts on his committees, that the main topics calling for treatment at Versailles had been handled by the Government draftsmen much too hastily and superficially, without going at all carefully into the points at issue. The Foreign Minister made up his mind that he would not make use of the Berlin draft. He felt that something more thorough, more effective, more solidly supported, was required to repel the attacks of the " Allied and Associated Powers." He

preferred to undertake the responsibility for preparing this himself in association with his band of experts. Dr. Simons encouraged him : " As Foreign Minister, you don't need anyone else to dictate your Notes ; you can write them yourself."

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau was, however, anxious to find a *modus vivendi*. It would perhaps be best to have a personal interview with the Cabinet, at which many of these differences which were present under the surface and made themselves felt from Berlin to Versailles, might be cleared away and perhaps definitely obviated for the future. He did not want to go to Berlin himself. That would not quite consort with his dignity, to have to go home and report. The expedient of a half-way consultation was agreed upon, and the Foreign Minister, accompanied by his leading experts, travelled to Spa. The Cabinet deputed some of its members to meet him there, in order to discuss in an amicable way the best method of proceeding on agreed lines.

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau was prepared to welcome any prospect of a return to harmony, but the news he had been receiving from Berlin up to the last few days only served to enhance his sense of divergence from the Cabinet's outlook. This was not so much due to the telegraphic despatches he received direct from the Government as to the unofficial discussions, the general kite-flying that had been going on in Berlin almost ever since the delegation reached Versailles. One could not put one's finger on the origin of these " feelers," nor say exactly to whom the results of the enquiries were reported, but a web of intrigue was being woven from all ends of the earth, centring always on Berlin. Some individual who had been entrusted by the enemy with preliminary negotiations at Versailles on some matter or other would go away and throw out suggestions in an apparently casual manner, but sufficiently clearly and persistently to make it unquestionable that he was fishing for definite information from the capital. Thus

a Danish business man living in England had had some non-committal discussions with the Foreign Minister about the exchange of prisoners. Shortly afterwards the Dane met a German acquaintance in Copenhagen and asked him : " Will Germany sign or not ? "

" Count Brockdorff-Rantzau has already stated that he will not," was the reply, " and you can be sure he will keep his word."

" I am not talking about Count Brockdorff-Rantzau," the Anglo-Danish merchant went on. " It doesn't matter what Count Rantzau says. If he does not sign, well, then, Erzberger will."

As soon as he heard of this, the Foreign Minister had asked his brother, who held an official position in Berlin, to see the President of the Reich, with the message : ' If these tales of disagreements in the Cabinet get abroad, a situation of the gravest danger will be created." . . . " My dear Count," the President had replied, " You can set your mind at rest. Your brother has the whole of the Cabinet and the unanimous public opinion of Germany behind him." But the President had admitted that Erzberger's attitude towards the German delegation and the general tone of his criticisms of the work that was being done at Versailles showed signs of a certain degree of jealousy. Count Rantzau had, it is true, invited his colleague in April to take part in the Versailles negotiations in conjunction with the delegation. " But that did not suit his book," the President had concluded. " He wanted to lead the delegation. But tell your brother to be perfectly easy in his mind. I am backing him unreservedly."

The President of the Reich did, in fact, have a word with Erzberger before the latter left for Spa, with the result that the divergence of view and friction between the two Ministers when they met in the Kursaal at Spa was, on the whole, less than either of them had anticipated. Towards

the end of the discussions, indeed, quite a conciliatory tone reigned. The Prime Minister, Philipp Scheidemann, who had accompanied Erzberger, kept in the background and left the latter to lead the discussion. Several hours were devoted to a detailed consideration of the memorandum which Erzberger had brought with him from Berlin as a sketch of what might be regarded as acceptable. Count Rantzau declined to adopt the precise wording of this draft in his main Reply to the Peace Conference, but after an adjournment of the debate in the Kursaal a compromise was agreed upon. The contents of the memorandum were to be regarded as a summary indication of how the Cabinet stood in principle with regard to the individual problems of the Peace. The Delegation and its leader were to be left to develop it as they thought fit, and also to take full responsibility for all details of the proposed " covering letter." The Foreign Minister had thus secured essentially what he wanted : to be allowed to reply to the enemy in his own way with the approval of the Cabinet unhampered in his choice of words or of themes, and in the use he made of his material. The delegation returned to Versailles, and the preparation of the " covering letter " was put in hand.

Jurists and industrialists, soldiers and stars in the financial firmament, all helped to build this final bastion against which the enemy's rapacity was to beat in vain. It was a last struggle for territory, for population, for honour and security, for national wealth, and for the inviolability of personal property. Germany would refuse to accept terms which clashed almost at every point with the agreement made with the President of the United States, and the delegation once more applied itself feverishly to the task of pointing out all the instances in the Treaty in which the Wilsonian principles had been ignored, brushed aside, and treated with contempt.

The German delegation entered a solemn protest

against the transfer of Alsace-Lorraine without a preliminary plebiscite, against the temporary separation of the Saar district, and against the claim advanced by France to place the Saar under her exclusive domination on the pretext that no other arrangement would secure to her the possession and enjoyment of the coal-mines there, which were to provide compensation for the pits destroyed in Northern France. They pointed out that compensation for lost coal output and political control were two different things, that the problem here was merely to fix an adequate indemnity on an economic basis, and that no question arose of redetermining political allegiance in a country which had been part of the German Reich, populated by German men and women, ever since the Treaty of Meersen in 870. The German delegation insisted, therefore, on this whole question being reopened, with a view to a solution being reached by negotiation on an economic basis, the only possible basis of settlement.

Further, the delegation continued the struggle for West Prussia, East Prussia, and Upper Silesia. They did not know that the President of the United States had originally been in favour of Clemenceau's favourite solution of the cession of the whole of Silesia, including even its capital, Breslau. They proved by statistics and historical data that the present proposals were entirely in conflict with all idea of a people's self-determination : they would involve the divorce from the Reich of territory which was purely and entirely German. They therefore rejected this plan. They freely admitted those justifiable cessions of territory which could be made. Districts with definitely Polish population should be transferred to the new State of Poland. But Germany could not part with Danzig. Danzig had been a German city from time immemorial. If it was only a question of finding Poland access to the sea, two other ports besides Danzig could be made available. But

Germany could not hand over the towns themselves to foreign rule. Further, it would be a clear case of the " surrender of indisputably German territory " if Germany were to hand over the districts of Eupen and Malmedy to Belgium. If Belgium complained that her forests had been destroyed or seriously damaged by the war, this was a matter for settlement as part of Reparations, under the heading of " agreements for the supply of timber," and not otherwise. Germany was determined to give effect to the Wilsonian imperative of the self-determination of peoples everywhere, even in Schleswig, though the President had made no mention of any " Schleswig question " and Germany had not been at war with Denmark. Long before the Peace Conference Prince Max of Baden had sent Dr. Simons to Count Moltke, the Danish Minister in Berlin, to announce that the German Government was ready " to negotiate direct with Denmark regarding a revision of Danish-German relations." But the German delegation were unable to concur in the procedure now laid down by the Peace Conference in regard to Schleswig : the limitation of the plebiscite area, the time-limit for voting, and the whole method of conducting the plebiscite. Further, there was one special case, one only, in which they claimed that the principle of self-determination should be applied to Germany also : that of German-Austria, and of German minorities in foreign States and in surrendered territories. So far as German-Austria was concerned, there were differences of opinion. Dr. Simons was really the only member of the delegation who was in favour of bringing the German-Austrians into the Reich. Dr. von Stockhammern, who was also consulted, opposed this course ; Count Rantzau himself was undecided. At the same time it was clear that a settlement of this question in her favour offered the only possibility of a gain for Germany in the whole of the Peace Treaty. If Wilson's

principle was to hold good, then the Austrians ought to be allowed to do as they pleased in the matter. The delegation accordingly decided to demand for the German-Austrians the right of free decision.

Dr. Simons was responsible for the section on " Reparations " in this final memorandum, whilst the sub-section on finance was in the hands of Herr Warburg, as before. The former also dealt, in conjunction with Privy Councillor Gauss, with the sections on " International Agreements," and the " Punitive Clauses," as well as seeing to the co-ordination of the whole of the material for the memorandum. Dr. Simons, in fact, had become, under the Foreign Minister, a sort of General Commissary to the Peace Delegation, and was certainly the hardest worked of all the experts and the one most frequently consulted on account of his ability as a jurist.

He had already written two Notes on the question of War Guilt. He now worked the same material into his section on Reparations, claiming that Germany must be given a clear indication of the limits of her obligations, and showing that this was only practicable if the War Guilt question was settled. The framework of the clauses dealing with Austria was also Dr. Simons's handiwork, and the exposition of the Alsace-Lorraine problem, apart from technical questions of railway administration, was almost entirely based on an original draft of his. The German opposition to the peace terms was embodied in this man, next to the Foreign Minister himself, and was reinforced and organized by his efforts. The draft Treaty was regarded by the whole of the German delegation as one great illegality, and the eminent jurist they possessed in Dr. Simons was not only their obvious standard-bearer in the campaign against illegality, but also the best man to devise means of countering it. Herr Giesberts, in conjunction with the Socialist Party leader Legien, dealt with "Labour,"

von Stockhammern with " Economic Capacity," and, in co-operation with Herr Gauss, with " German rights and interests outside Germany," the industrialists Röchling and Hilger, together with the Social Democratic leader Zechlin, and assisted by officials of the Foreign office, with the Upper Silesian question, with Poland and other frontier problems ; but it was Dr. Simons who undertook the final revision and put the last polish on their drafts. The whole memorandum was informed with the spirit of resistance and resolute defence, modified by the reiterated willingness to make such sacrifices as equity and compliance with the agreement of November 1918 might require.

Even this memorandum, however, could only touch upon the most important of the points at issue, and could not even deal with these exhaustively. It ended by demanding the opening now of proper negotiations. It emphasized the impossibility of Germany's representatives signing the Treaty with any sense of binding responsibility until its form had been changed and the suggested amendments embodied in it or an agreement reached as to the procedure to be adopted for effecting the necessary changes.

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau affixed his signature to this memorandum, which his experts had taken pains to put together in as concise, as lucid, and as well-documented a form as possible. It was, in the main, a summary of what Germany felt bound to resist and refuse. He then proceeded to draw up a comprehensive covering letter to go with the memorandum to the Chairman of the Peace Conference, setting forth in the clearest terms the legitimate sacrifices that Germany was prepared to make. He drew up, in German, French, and English, a list of the forfeits Germany was ready to pay. The State that had once been a fortress of militarism would be content with an army of 100,000 men, and would disarm completely in all other respects. Germany would even renounce her right to the five or six

warships allotted to her by the Treaty if she were going to become a member of the League of Nations (this offer had already been made to the Conference by Count Rantzau a few days earlier). Next, the agreed surrenders of territory were summarized. As regards Reparations, the Reich would undertake payments up to a maximum of 100 milliard gold marks. During the coming ten years she would deliver 140,000,000 tons of coal alone as compensation for the destruction of the mines of Northern France. In addition to this, France, Belgium, Italy, and Luxemburg would be supplied with coal, benzole, coal-tar, dyestuffs, pharmaceutical products, and all sorts of other commodities. Germany would " throw the whole of her merchant shipping into a World Pool, and place a certain proportion of the freightage at the disposal of the enemy countries on Reparation account ; at the same time she would construct on their behalf in German shipyards over a period of years new merchant ships to a tonnage even exceeding what they had claimed." She would, in addition, deliver river craft to compensate for those destroyed on the Belgian and French rivers. Finally, Germany offered the enemy, " with a view to expediting the fulfilment of her reparation obligations," a share in her industrial undertakings.

One counter demand only the Foreign Minister included in his covering letter, but with emphasis. He insisted on the real facts regarding the question of War Guilt being clearly ascertained by means of an international enquiry. Only if complete clarity were attained on this question, he claimed, could the present universal mistrust be removed and a suitable atmosphere be created for the formation of a League of Nations.

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau now put his name to the covering letter, and this Note, together with the detailed memorandum and the numerous appendices on " special legal points " which had been prepared by Privy-Councillor Gauss, was delivered to the Peace Conference on

May 29. Nothing had come from the other side to the Hôtel des Réservoirs since the Chairman's reply, five days earlier, on territorial questions and the proposed settlement in the Saar Valley, which had offered no concessions. Now the plenipotentiaries had, to the best of their convictions, said on behalf of Germany all that could be said in so short a space of time. They could do nothing more but wait and see what slight measure of success their efforts might bring forth.

The next few days passed uneventfully. After the feverish haste to complete their work in the time allotted, the German delegates now made use of the permission to go for country drives. They also went over their material and embodied any fresh data they could think of, in case the enemy should, after all, decide to negotiate. During this period a French journalist called one day on Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, in the hope of gleaning some information as to his willingness to sign the Treaty. He opened in a tone of ironical flattery:

"I expect your Excellency will have seen in the *Galerie des Maréchaux* here the portrait of Field-Marshal Josias Rantzau. Do you know, your Excellency, that there is a legend that Louis XIV was an illegitimate son of this French field-marshal?"

"Oh, yes," the Count replied, "there is a tradition in our family to that effect dating back two hundred years. What comforts one about it is that, if the tradition is based on fact, the Rantzaus are not illegitimate Bourbons, but the Bourbons bastard Rantzaus."

The Frenchman retired. He was succeeded by an Englishman who was the bearer of more important tidings. It seemed possible, in fact, that his visit was not without the knowledge and authorization of the British Prime Minister. Some slight change of attitude was obviously about to take place, or perhaps had already occurred in the enemy camp. In point of fact the determined tone of the German "covering letter" had created in Lloyd George's mind a sudden

feeling of disquiet, which promptly developed—such was his temperament—into unconcealed alarm lest the enemy's power of resistance should have been underestimated and he should refuse to sign after all. He realized now that the terms were too harsh, and said so. He was in favour of making concessions. Alternative solutions to some of the problems could easily be found. By the end of the first week in June the German delegation had gained the strong impression that their opponents were inclined to listen to counsels of moderation in certain directions. The non-committal conversations with the English emissary hinted at favourable modifications that Great Britain might be willing to accept in regard to merchant shipping and colonies, and France in regard to reparations, the Rhine, and Germany's eastern frontiers.

On June 7, however, an unofficial, unconfirmed rumour reached the Delegation from Berlin to the effect that Germany was prepared to sign the Peace Treaty. It seemed as if the Allies had received a similar message at the same time which sufficed to bring about a fresh change in their attitude. The British Premier's emissary was seen no more. Lloyd George was reported as having resumed his talk of a stern resolve to enforce the demands embodied in the Peace Treaty with all available resources. All signs of a changed attitude in the other camp had disappeared.

A week later the German plenipotentiaries were roused to action again by the news that the Peace Conference had a definite communication to make to them. Far-reaching amendments had been made, they heard, as the result of Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's covering Note. The revised terms were to be presented in the Hôtel des Réservoirs in the room overlooking the garden. The Foreign Minister returned the reply that he would send his General Commissary to receive the communication.

On July 17 Colonel Henry, with a second officer, called

THE GERMAN DELEGATES BEFORE LEAVING THE HOTEL DES RESERVOIRS FOR THE TRIANON PALACE ON MAY 7, 1919

for Dr. Simons, who was accompanied by Baron von Lersner. The French officer disdained to take the short cut across the courtyard of the hotel, but led the two delegates out into the road, through the wire fence that shut off the hotel, past crowds of silent onlookers to the second turning which took them right round the building. At the end of this mummery they entered the hotel again by the back door and reached the room looking on to the garden. M. Dutasta, the general secretary of the Peace Conference, handed Dr. Simons a fresh copy of the peace terms with the message that the German delegation was required to announce its decision for or against signing within three days. Dr. Simons immediately entered a protest against this time-limit as being too short. The delegation could not come to a decision as regards signing the Treaty on their own responsibility. The German Federal Constitution necessitated certain formalities and the concurrence of each of the States of the Reich was requisite before they could either accept or decline the terms. M. Dutasta took note of this protest. Then the procession returned by the same route, out of the little room, through the back door on to the street, behind the wire fence, through the silent, respectful crowds, the two French officers marching on either side of the German delegates.

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau immediately called his experts together for a consultation. They had before them the same thick white volume which had been handed to the Foreign Minister six weeks before in the Trianon Palace Hotel. A few clauses had been crossed out in red ink and replaced by alternative provisions, also inserted in red ink in manuscript. This was the one and only copy of the final draft of the Peace Conference of the Allied and Associated Powers. The "far-reaching amendments" were studied. Political sovereignty in the Saar territory was to be exercised not by France alone, but by a League of Nations Commission of five members, one to be a Frenchman, one a

non-French inhabitant of the Saar basin, and the other three neither French nor German. The removal of the district from German sovereignty remained. The Polish question was finally settled, and a plebiscite granted for Upper Silesia.

This was too little to make it possible to think of signing. Not a word about discussions or negotiations, no possibility of substantiating by the submission of evidence their contentions as to the irrefutable inequity or the impracticability of certain provisions. This last conference of the delegates at Versailles was filled with gloomy depression, but none the less all were firmly resolved to go before the National Assembly and urge that it was impossible for Germany to sign. The meeting was interrupted by a messenger from Clemenceau. He brought a written ultimatum. The exchange of Notes must now cease. The Peace Conference required to know within the shortest possible time whether the terms were going to be signed or not. The time-limit now offered was five days. An extension of forty-eight hours had been secured by the protest made by Dr. Simons. This, however, made no practical difference. The Foreign Minister announced that he would leave that evening, with the rest of the German delegation, for Weimar, the seat of the German National Assembly.

They packed in frantic haste. Only the boxes containing official documents were to accompany the delegates. Colonel Henry sent cars to convey the plenipotentiaries to Neuilly, from which station the special train for Germany was to start, but the number of cars was insufficient. The decision to leave had come too suddenly for the authorities at Versailles, who were supposed to be prepared for any eventuality. But it did not come suddenly enough to prevent demonstrations in the streets aroused by the news that the Germans were going away without having signed.

The first cars left as twilight was deepening. Crowds still surrounded the Hôtel des Réservoirs, but the silent

onlookers of the earlier part of the day had given place to a mob which groaned, hissed, and shouted. The Ligue des Patriotes had assembled in force, while the police stood by and took no steps to prevent disorder. The first cars conveyed the subordinate officials. Only Herr von Haniel was staying behind at the Hôtel des Réservoirs, with a small fraction of the delegation. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau entered the last car to the accompaniment of the loudest noise from the mob, which began to howl and whistle and looked about for missiles. The cars drove fairly slowly, and the rage of the crowd increased. Finally stones began to fly. Herr Giesberts's car had one of the windows broken and his lady secretary was wounded in the head. The French officers now ordered the speed to be increased. Neuilly was reached at last.

The special train was very slow. The journey to Weimar was timed to take a whole day and two nights, and the delegates were anxious, in fact obliged, to make use of the time spent on the journey to draw up the memorandum which was to be laid before the National Assembly. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau presided over the meetings of the committees. Dr. Simons was responsible for the arrangement of matter, and undertook, as before, the final coordination of the memorandum. During the second night in the train he dictated, on the basis of the committee's deliberations the day before, the report of the delegation, which was to serve at the same time as a resolution for the National Assembly proposing the rejection of the terms. The plenipotentiaries just had time to sign the report before the train entered the station at Weimar. Dr. Simons had run through all the details at the last moment with Herr Giesberts, who remarked in utter exhaustion, as the train came to a standstill, " I was half asleep when I signed."

They reached Weimar in the early morning of June 19. The Foreign Minister drove straight to the ex-Grand Ducal Palace, where the members of the Cabinet were assembled.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SURRENDER

At his interview with the Cabinet, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau once more gave his reasons for recommending the rejection of the Treaty. Giesberts and Landsberg had accompanied him, and they could suggest no alternative to their leader's proposals. When he had completed his formal report Count Rantzau went on to elaborate the considerations which had led him to make up his mind so definitely.

" There are two slogans," he told the Ministers, " which I was up against during the whole of the war : ' Hold out ! ' and ' Time is on our side ! ' It is these same two slogans, strangely enough, that I find now I must adopt myself." He pointed out to the Cabinet that the enemy Governments would be bound to fall out among themselves within very little time owing to the multiplicity of their interests and to their rival greeds and rapacities.

He did not and could not know that they had actually passed that stage and reached agreement ; nor that his proposed line of action was foredoomed to failure chiefly because the evident indecision of the German Government and the universally accepted rumours that it was going to give way had undermined the Allies' belief in the seriousness of his own opposition.

" If we can ' hold out ' for two or three months, our enemies will be at loggerheads over the division of the spoils, and then we shall get better terms. If we sign now, no one will trouble to ask later on whether we signed under duress or not ; our signature will have provided them with a formal legal authorization for all their demands."

He drove home his contention : " If we refuse to sign, we

shall be in purgatory for a time, for two or at most three months. If we sign, it means a lingering disease, of which the nation will perish."

That was his whole message. The Ministers listened without coming to a decision. Count Rantzau could not fathom exactly what their attitude was ; in fact, the members of the Cabinet themselves were at the moment uncertain which way their decision would go. Only the Commander-in-Chief, Noske, went so far as to assure the Foreign Minister, as the latter left the meeting : " I am perfectly clear about it. I understand your point of view entirely."

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau went into the park. He felt he had given the Cabinet all the information they needed to come to a decision. Now he would simply be guided by their decision, whichever way it went. Meanwhile he would get a breath of fresh air.

The Cabinet went on with their discussion. But after Count Rantzau's report and explanation the two opposing camps, those in favour of signing and those against, had grown more sharply defined. The Prime Minister, Philipp Scheidemann, had taken his stand already in a big public speech in Berlin. He had no choice left but to stand by his refusal to sign, or else to resign office. Up to now President Ebert had also been against signing, but his present attitude was uncertain. Herr Reinhardt, the War Minister, was bound out of regard for his corps of officers to be against the acceptance of terms which would entail bringing their leaders in the war to trial. But Matthias Erzberger's convictions remained unshaken. He regarded submission as the only gateway to renascence for Germany. He drew a lurid picture of the horrors that would inevitably follow immediately on a refusal. His remarks created a profound impression, and several members of the Cabinet wavered. It was decided to question Count Brockdorff-Rantzau once more, and Erzberger was asked to send for

him. In the meantime, Dr. Simons was summoned and asked a few questions on points of detail. Erzberger reported that the Foreign Minister was nowhere to be found, but Dr. Dernburg sent out into the park, and the Count returned to the palace.

The suggestion had been made that it might be feasible to sign with the proviso that Germany would not undertake to surrender the ex-Kaiser and the military leaders. This was now to be discussed.

The Commander-in-Chief, Noske, had been sent for out of the Cabinet room to receive a report of a meeting which the army leaders had just held. Some of them had still been declaring that military resistance could be continued if an appeal were made to the whole nation to support it. Noske had ordered a detailed plan to be prepared for such an attempt and was now examining it. These army leaders' views had also been communicated to Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, who sent the following reply to the Commander-in-Chief :

" If hostilities were resumed we should be able from a military point of view to recover the province of Posen and to defend our frontiers in the East ; but in the West, in view of the numerical superiority of the Entente Powers, which enables them to hem us in on both flanks, we could hardly hope for success if the enemy attacked seriously. The success of the operation as a whole would, therefore, be very doubtful, but as a soldier I can only prefer honourable defeat to a disgraceful peace."

Noske concluded that resistance by the army and by a national rising would be futile. On his return to the Cabinet meeting he at once took pains to remove any uncertainty on this point, speaking bluntly and unromantically, as he always did when he was faced with any attempt to gloss over hard facts. A new military adventure had a very different aspect here in Weimar from what it

would look like at the frontiers if the enemy crossed them. And they would not stop short at the frontiers. He brushed the project aside :

" It is all very fine for us fifteen heroes to sit here and refuse to sign. But behind us there is a nation which is down and out. What is the use of heroics on the part of fifteen leaders in that situation ? "

Noske had now turned completely round from his attitude of the same morning, when he had approved Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's policy ; he had now reached the same conclusions as Erzberger, albeit from quite a different direction and from different motives. He had no faith in the enemy's lenience. He regarded the peace terms as an enormity, an outrageous act of naked violence. But he felt that the nation's *moral* had gone. Consequently there was no alternative but to sign. Resistance would be something even worse than the " gambler's plunge," which Erzberger was calling it to the Foreign Minister's face—it would be sheer madness.

Matthias Erzberger was infuriated at Count Rantzau's proposal to take upon himself the responsibility of saying " No " at Versailles, with all it involved. But he was mistaken in thinking that the Count was still dreaming of reawakening the roar of the guns, of a last heroic stand. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau knew that the German people would not listen to any further suggestion of military self-sacrifice ; he was as convinced of that as Noske or as Erzberger himself. But he still clung to the belief that dissensions in the camp of the Allies would soon make it possible for Germany to secure more reasonable peace terms.

The Cabinet was divided almost equally, and the struggle between the Foreign Minister and Erzberger remained in the balance. The President, who had grown more and more silent, stood between the opposing groups of Cabinet Ministers, all irresolute and weighed down with their

grave responsibility. Late that night Count Brockdorff-Rantzau had an interview with the President alone. Ebert's suspended judgment had given place to visible depression.

" Since these divisions have become public property," said the Foreign Minister, " we have lost our best trump cards for negotiating with the enemy."

The President did not reply, and the Foreign Minister went on :

" The solidarity of the Cabinet no longer exists, and the enemy know it. We must shoulder the consequences."

The President did not ask how he was to take this statement—whether the Foreign Minister was now coming round to the view that there was no alternative left but to agree to sign, or whether he was suggesting that the President ought to use the full weight of his authority to endeavour to heal the breach in the Cabinet and engineer a unanimous vote against signing. He only repeated, in a tired voice :

" Yes, we must."

There was no course left open to the Foreign Minister but to resign. But it chanced that on the following day he heard that the Federal Chamber[1] had decided to debate the question of the Peace Treaty, to give the representatives of the various German States and their Governments the opportunity to speak. Count Rantzau determined to make one last attempt. He would address first the Federal Chamber and then the National Assembly, and urge that Germany should refuse to sign. He attended the meeting, and gave once more a full explanation of his point of view. But Erzberger was not to be silenced :

" If we don't sign, then the niggers will come and ravish our wives and girls and children."

The Southern and Western States were inclined to favour signing the Treaty. They were nearest to the enemy armies, and feared devastation, reprisals, looting, atrocities

[1] Staatenhaus.

of all sorts. The prophecy held out by Erzberger was more than enough to decide them. He had referred to things that would certainly happen ; the Foreign Minister to a turn of the tide that at best was reasonably possible. The representative of Hesse got up to express his view :

" What Mr. Secretary Schön has said sounds well enough ; but there's no getting away from the fact that it is merely surmise."

Someone whispered a correction :

" Count Brockdorff-Rantzau."

But the representative of Hesse cared nothing for names or persons. He repeated :

" Very well, Mr. Brockdorff then. What I said of Mr. Schön applies equally to Mr. Brockdorff-Rantzau."

The Foreign Minister gave up the struggle. He had prepared a big speech for the National Assembly, but the speech was never delivered. He had lost, though he did not admit defeat for his policy or his attitude. He wrote to President Ebert :

" Weimar, *June* 20, 1919.

" To the President of the Reich.

" Sir,—When I assumed the direction of Germany's foreign policy, I explicitly accepted the twofold task of maintaining the unity of the Reich and securing a tolerable peace for the German nation. In taking over the office I also made certain stipulations of a political nature, and these have been honourably adhered to in my favour so far as circumstances allowed.

" The foreign policy that I pursued could only be supported by reason and argument. As a result of her military defeat, her political revolution, and the economic disabilities inflicted by the Armistice, Germany's material power no longer existed. Nevertheless, I venture to assert that I have succeeded in raising her political credit abroad. I ascribe this success to the

fact that I have never deviated from the path along which I set out to guide the foreign policy of the Reich.

" With a full sense of responsibility I formulated certain far-reaching minimum requirements for the coming peace, in such definite terms that I cannot now depart from them without forfeiting all claims to be regarded as politically sincere. These minimum requirements refer chiefly to territorial problems, to the repudiation of the unjust charges against our nation in regard to responsibility for the war, and to the preservation of our social and economic freedom. It was with deliberate intent that I took a public stand on these points and that I definitely committed myself in face of the enemy, for I wished them to realize amid all the intoxication of victory that firm determination could set limits to their power.

" I came back from Versailles in the confident hope that my policy would be crowned with success if only the German nation supported me and was ready to face the grave dangers—I fully recognize their gravity—with which the enemy are threatening and endeavouring to intimidate us. The discussions here at Weimar have, however, shown me that there are considerations of internal politics, more especially the prevalent conception of the psychological condition of our sorely tried nation, which render it impossible, in the eyes of the Government, to venture the risk without which my plan cannot succeed. It was, I am convinced, no mere gambler's throw. It merely called for firmness and self-confidence. I have not lost confidence myself. The German nation is now the principal champion of democratic ideals in the world. There is a world mission of which Germany is the chosen instrument, but which she can only fulfil if she does not lose faith in herself. To stand clearly and unambiguously for a policy of democratic self-determination and social justice is

Germany's main justification in the future ; this and implacable hostility to the capitalism and imperialism which are enshrined in the enemy's draft peace terms, will ensure her a glorious future.

" On the very threshold of success, however, I am compelled at present to turn back. It has thus become impossible for me to continue to direct Germany's foreign policy. I do not wish to imply that a servant of the Crown has any right to decline to carry on his functions if the force of circumstances induces his Government to come to decisions which he regards as essentially mistaken. It is not a question of whether I personally feel the direction of a policy based on the acceptance of the enemy's terms to be tolerable or not. On quite other grounds I should consider it a grave mistake, fatal to the success of the foreign policy of the Reich, if I were to remain in office. Any other German Cabinet Minister might modify his attitude towards the peace terms, if internal conditions were to demand it, without arousing criticism from abroad. But for a Foreign Minister to participate in such a modified policy after having publicly dissociated himself from it, would prejudice the dignity and the credit of the Reich. If his foreign policy has proved to be impracticable, then he must cease to represent his country in international affairs.

" If Germany now accepts the enemy's peace terms, there are certain political benefits to be reaped from this enormous sacrifice : a relaxation of tension in foreign relations, the allaying of the feelings of hatred and revenge, the withdrawal of the enemy troops, a paving of the way towards real peace negotiations. All these benefits would be jeopardized, perhaps even go by the board entirely, if the new international relations had to be conducted by a man who has repudiated the enemy's conditions so vigorously as I have done.

"If the present Treaty is to be signed, either with or without reservations, if an attempt is to be made, against my convictions, to purchase some further relaxation of the terms by concessions which go beyond the limits I have fixed, then this new policy must be carried on by a new Foreign Minister, by a man less 'committed' than I am. I deeply regret having to cause the Government and particularly you, sir, further difficulties by my resignation, but the only course which I can reconcile with my conscience as the Minister responsible for German foreign policy is to insist respectfully on being relieved of my office.

"BROCKDORFF-RANTZAU."

The Foreign Minister left the political arena—with the dignity of a *grand seigneur*, the same dignity that had been his most precious gift to his country on the day of her humiliation in the Trianon Palace Hotel. He could not stay in the Cabinet, as the Government was obviously tending towards a solution other than his convictions and conscience would admit. He was averse to staying in any case, since he regarded the Cabinet as responsible, through its disunity and the opportunities it thereby gave the enemy, for the impotence of his own policy. Dr. Simons did not wish to stay in the Foreign Office without his chief. Count Rantzau reminded him that, if he too resigned, there would be no one left to carry on the main lines of policy hitherto followed. But Dr. Simons saw no chance of saving any part of their policy from the wreck. He asked permission to resign, and followed the Minister into private life.

Just about the same time the young French Professor Hesnard was finding a great deal to report to his superior, Professor Haguenin. He had been to Weimar for a fortnight, having come there on his own initiative, but with the special sanction of his elder colleague, who thought

he himself ought not to leave Berlin. Professor Hesnard was doing his best to imbibe all the views and standpoints of parties, Ministers, and politicians generally, which might have any bearing on the question of the signing of the Treaty. Members of the Right parties, of the Centre, even of the Democratic party made no secret of their conviction that it was chiefly the " points of honour "—the surrender of the Kaiser and his generals—which made the Treaty unacceptable for them. Men of the Left parties said the same about the economic terms. The only discordant view, on the whole, was that of some of the Communist leaders whom Professor Hesnard questioned. The Communist party had, indeed, already issued a special manifesto, in the midst of the Versailles negotiations, calling publicly for the signing of the Treaty under any conditions. This had marked, in Count Rantzau's view, the first important weakening of the German will to resistance. Now Haase, the leader of the Independent Socialists, also assured the French professor that it was inevitable that the Treaty should be signed. Dr. Simons had sent an emissary, Dr. Melchior, to this particular Labour leader at the beginning of June, at the time when the former had had occasion to leave Versailles for Berlin, to point out emphatically " the fatal damage that his policy might do, and to tell him that one of the few chances to improve on the peace terms lay in a concerted protest by the whole international Labour movement, including the sections in the enemy countries, against the imperialist and capitalist nature of the Allies' draft Treaty—a protest which would naturally be stultified if the German Labour movement were to declare in favour of the Treaty." But in his interview with Professor Hesnard, Haase showed no change in his attitude, except that he added, as a sort of mental reservation—at least the Frenchman took it as such—that, although the enemy could count on getting

Germany's signature, it remained to be seen whether the terms could be carried out. Thus the agreement of the Left wing Socialist parties was assured, and Professor Hesnard devoted his attention to the "inacceptable" terms according to the moderate Socialists, those relating to the economic penalties, endeavouring to persuade them by reference to books, statistics, and graphs, sent at his request from Paris, relating to the destruction caused by Germany in Belgium and Northern France, that the extreme demands were necessary and inevitable. The Socialists were silent, and made no reply thereafter when they were asked whether Germany would sign.

Erzberger saw Hesnard almost every day. At first he came to him full of indignation, flushed with anger :

"These points of honour are quite inacceptable. No German will stand them."

The young Professor Hesnard made it clear that he was in no sense authorized to give any official information on the subject, but suggested that, after all, theory and practice were two different things, here as everywhere. As he had mentioned several times already in Berlin, Erzberger and the political parties must not think that the Kaiser and his generals would actually be treated quite so badly as they imagined. The Minister went away feeling less worried than when he had arrived, and repeated what he had heard to his colleagues and the other parties. The professor also naturally reported to his superior what he had heard and the statements he himself had made. Professor Haguenin, who was in a position to discuss any and every point with the President and the Prime Minister of the French Republic, was able to give any explanations or interpretations in much more definite terms and in a much more official and responsible tone. He reiterated and confirmed the assurances which Professor Hesnard had given in the form of suggestions as to

what was likely actually to happen, and to the exaggerated nature of the Germans' fears for the future. As a result of these parleys Matthias Erzberger became, if he was not already, the busiest of all the German Ministers, and when Professor Hesnard again questioned representative members of the Democratic and Centre parties, and even some from the Right, about the way the decision was likely to go, their "unacceptable" had a fainter ring about it, restrained, diffident, sounding almost like "acceptable."

Anyhow, the French observer gradually began to get quite a definite impression, which grew to a certainty, that Germany would definitely not decline to sign the Treaty even in its existing form. While the Cabinet were still at the height of their debates and the division of opinion, for and against, was still almost equal, he reported to Professor Haguenin : " As I see it, the Peace Treaty will be accepted "—just that and nothing more.

It cannot be asserted as a fact that Professor Haguenin had actually reported to Paris the suggestions of probable leniency that his emissary had put into circulation at Weimar, even though he had himself confirmed the benign assurances given to Herr Erzberger. But it is quite certain that he immediately repeated to Paris Hesnard's latest message from Weimar, greatly surprised as he was at the definiteness of the prophecy.

In those days many people in Germany talked to Professor Haguenin about peace and the prospects of peace, and all who did so were bound to acknowledge the spirit of conciliation with which everything he said was filled. In person he was a man of very polished exterior and aristocratic mien, notwithstanding his thick-set build and powerful neck, but when in thought he was inclined to moodiness, and his glance often left his interlocutor and strayed into vacancy. He was a lover of good company and good fare and a devoted amateur both of the arts and the sciences.

Thus, he seemed quite obviously a stranger to all the machinations of hatred and dissension among the peoples, if only by reason of the adverse effect which such estrangements always have on scholarly pursuits, on the fine arts, and on the material joys of life. It is true that the professor's standing in Germany and his conciliatory efforts were slightly prejudiced by the fact that he was the emissary of Poincaré and Clemenceau and a close personal friend of both, for it was inevitable that he should be guided in various ways by the particular aims of his two chiefs. He was not well off, but for years past had got out of the habit of watching his expenditure. Since he had been in the employ of the French Government he had been entrusted with numerous confidential missions, the first being in Switzerland during the war, and he had often been surprised at the munificence of his employers, who remitted to him any amount he asked for his expenses without troubling him for details. And it was not only his political career which depended on the extent to which he gave satisfaction in Paris ; he dared not from sheer bread-and-butter motives jeopardize his position in Berlin, which in the ordinary course might be expected to develop into confidential employment in a larger sphere in the German capital. His needs were considerable and his means limited ; his health had been undermined by an intemperate youth, and he had to take care and treat himself as an invalid. He was averse to any sort of excitement, and it was most natural that he should instinctively show a conciliatory front to the defeated enemy of yesterday, while taking, of course, all the precautions that stern necessity dictated to keep in with his powerful patrons in Paris. It was entirely in line with his own sentiments to speak of a coming age of leniency in his conversations at Weimar and Berlin, but he had to bear in mind at the same time that the "Council of Four" themselves were by no means quite confident, were, indeed, in the highest

degree worried and apprehensive, as to Germany's intention of signing the Treaty. In these circumstances it was a matter of the greatest moment to know just what was likely to happen, whether this concession or that would be required in order to reach a final settlement, or whether concessions were entirely unnecessary since Germany would swallow everything in any case. So that the professor was only doing his duty—which, after all, had no necessary connexion with his own general inclination towards conciliatory measures—when he telegraphed to his Government in Paris :

" Germany will sign. Unconditionally. Don't give anything away "

—and meanwhile left his colleague Hesnard to continue the Weimar conversations in accordance with the lines he had himself laid down.

To secure some relaxation at least of the harshest terms of all, the elimination of the " points of honour," the minimal alleviations which Count Brockdorff-Rantzau had declared, in resigning, to be in his belief unobtainable whatever sacrifices the Government might agree to make—this was the final effort carried on first by the old Cabinet until it was forced by the crisis to resign, and then by a new Government formed in haste and with difficulty. The Peace Treaty required not only that the Kaiser and the generals should be apprehended and brought to trial before enemy tribunals, together with all other " persons accused of having committed acts in violation of the laws and customs of war," but also that Germany should herself carry out the bailiff's function of apprehending the accused, and should voluntarily provide all documents and information of every kind needed for the trial of these German subjects. The new Cabinet drafted the following formula for the acceptance of the Treaty, which seemed to them to be the only possible wording :

" The Government of the German Republic is prepared to sign the Peace Treaty, without, however, acknowledging

that the German nation is the sole author of the war, and without accepting the obligations laid down in Articles 227 to 230 of the Treaty."

A draft of a final Note, in which an attempt was made to secure the remnants of some exiguous concessions, to save some few scraps of German territory and German trades, to save the German people at least from the spectacle of the trial of its leaders, was sent off to Herr von Haniel, who was instructed to obtain the concurrence of the Peace Conference to these proposals. The Cabinet as a whole was sceptical of success, but one Minister at least prophesied that this last effort would bear fruit.

But the will to resistance was at its last gasp. Early on Sunday morning, June 22, the National Assembly met to discuss the wording of the formula by which the Government were to be authorized to sign the Treaty. The two parties represented in the new Cabinet, the Social Democrats and the Centre, proposed a resolution in the following terms :

" The National Assembly approves of the attitude of the Government in regard to the signing of the Peace Treaty."

But protests were raised. To express definite approval of such a step was more than the Assembly could or would tolerate. An amendment was proposed in these words :

" The National Assembly agrees to authorize the Government to sign the Peace Treaty."

Representatives of the parties of the Right were loud in their protestations. To say they " agreed " would mean that they accepted everything, without mentioning that it was done under duress, without any reservation. But even as they spoke the protesters knew that their protests were only of theatrical importance. Everything depended on von Haniel's reply, on the wire from the Hôtel des Réservoirs. If no reply were received, the Treaty would have to be signed unconditionally or else the Cabinet would have to decide on a resumption of war, of the hopeless defensive war

of a disarmed nation. The time-limit set by the Peace Conference was expiring ; only a few hours were left.

The telegram from von Haniel reported the very opposite of success. The Peace Conference would abate not a jot or tittle of their terms. The reply was unsparing in its directness and harsh in its wording. It had been drafted this time by the President of the United States instead of by the French Prime Minister, although it bore Clemenceau's signature. It was Wilson who served out to Germany her iron ration of freedom with a frigid, formal cruelty, a supercilious matter-of-factness which was perhaps largely a pathological display of relish in a style which was not at all his forte, and which he was now employing as the gravedigger of his own idealism, in an attempt to out-Herod Herod :

" Sir,—The Allied and Associated Powers have considered the Note of the German Delegation of even date, and in view of the shortness of the time remaining feel it their duty to reply at once.

" Of the time within which the German Government must make their final decision as to the signature of the Treaty, less than twenty-four hours remain. The Allied and Associated Governments have given the fullest consideration to all of the representations hitherto made by the German Government with regard to the Treaty, have replied with complete frankness, and have made such concessions as they thought it right to make, and the present Note of the German Delegation presents no arguments or considerations not already examined.

" The Allied and Associated Powers therefore feel constrained to say that the time for discussion has passed. They can accept or acknowledge no qualification or reservation, and must require of the German representatives an unequivocal decision as to their purpose to sign

and accept as a whole or not to sign and accept the Treaty as finally formulated."

The French Prime Minister had only to add, in his own objective way :

" After the signature the Allied and Associated Powers must hold Germany responsible for the execution of every stipulation of the Treaty.

" I have, etc., " CLEMENCEAU."

That was the end. There was no need for further discussion. Now it was for the President of the Reich to decide what choice he should make for Germany.

The Commander-in-Chief, Noske, had just left for Berlin, having been called away, together with his staff, to deal with urgent business. He was stopped and brought back to Weimar by special train. Once more the fateful question was canvassed : " Shall we resist ? "

General Groener, the Quartermaster-General of the Forces, was consulted at the eleventh hour. He knew the state of the army, officers and men. His views had changed since the day when, two months before, he had demanded that Germany's position as a Great Power, as a Power whose value as an ally would be unimpaired, should be safeguarded at all costs. He thought differently now about the Wilsonsian ethics and their potency. Speaking to his officers at G.H.Q. five short weeks after his previous pronouncement, he had painted another picture of a Germany in the grip of fate :

" I have reconciled myself to the fact that Germany has fallen to the rank of a second-rate Power through her defeat in the war. The aim that we must now, in my opinion, set before ourselves is to hold the sixty million Germans firmly together in one single State, as far as possible a centralized State. . . . A new State must be formed, radiating from the plains of Northern Germany,

and for the present this will have to be a second-class Power. When we have attained this, a great deal will have been gained. And if we then go on steadily working, training up new leaders from our younger generation who will adapt themselves to the needs of the new age and supersede the stupid, antiquated German party system which largely represents the survival of obsolete, effete ideas, then I consider we shall have consolidated our future. Then I do not see why we should not forge ahead again, especially in the economic field. In a military sense, gentlemen, I am personally convinced that our progress will be slow. . . . I am not under any illusions on that score, because I know too well what the aims of our enemies are."

On the same day on which the German delegation left the Hôtel des Réservoirs at Versailles, General Groener reviewed once more the four alternatives which remained for organizing armed resistance on the Eastern front. Three of these he rejected outright as soon as he mentioned them in his memorandum, but the fourth needed more careful consideration. The plan was to deal with Poland first, to attack and annihilate the armies of the new State, and then to turn between the Bug and the Vistula and advance to meet the oncoming Allies in a final engagement. But even here, the more he looked into the plan, the more he found nothing but contradictory reports, doubts, and uncertainty. When finally he was consulted by telephone he had faced the bitter reality. He gave the following unequivocal reply :

" I am bound to report that a campaign in the East, though temporary successes might be registered, would offer no prospect of ultimate victory. Moreover, unless you [Noske] explain in a public proclamation that the conclusion of peace is a stern necessity, and call upon every officer and man to remain at his post to safeguard the fatherland after peace has been signed, and to continue

to do his duty to his country, there is little prospect of the army supporting you and thus preventing the recurrence both of insurrectionary movements in the interior and of skirmishes with the enemy in the East."

All idea of final resistance thus fell to the ground. The Commander-in-Chief took no notice of General Groener's request that a public proclamation should be issued. He realized that the Reich had now reached the most desperate of all its crises. A number of the generals had announced that they would resign if the Treaty were signed. That would mean chaos, and the dissolution of even the remnants of material power which Germany still had at her disposal for the maintenance of public order. Rather than witness such chaos, he would prefer the enemy to march in. That would, at any rate, stimulate a " revival of national self-respect." Three days before, Noske had agreed with Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, just back from Versailles. Then he had appeared to favour a refusal to sign the Treaty. On the next day he had scorned all idea of resistance, saying that the whole nation was " down and out." Then he had appeared to favour signing the Treaty. Now he feared that, with the break-up of the army, the backbone of the nation would surely give way, and that would be the end of all things. The Commander-in-Chief therefore now refused to agree to the Treaty being signed. Let the enemy come. He would resign.

The decision was left almost entirely with President Ebert. He had canvassed all possible points of view. The majority of the Cabinet were in favour of signing. The National Assembly could suggest no other alternative, and spoke not of a national rising, but of submission. Right up to the last the President had been secretly thinking of resisting, but General Groener's last report made the very idea a crime against the nation. The enemy hordes would not only penetrate from the West, but there would be war

on the Polish front, and possibly with Czechoslovakia too. Noske's resignation would certainly bring the crisis to a head, but the generals would be persuaded to stay, and perhaps the Commander-in-Chief would then follow suit. That would mean that the army remained intact, and internal order would be safeguarded, at any rate. An end must be put to this uncertainty, and there seemed no other way. The President gave his decision in favour of signing, unconditionally, without protest, as had been demanded. Von Haniel was to be instructed accordingly.

The young French professor dashed to the telephone and rang up the Hotel Adlon in Berlin. The lift-boy took down a message on a slip of paper at Hesnard's dictation, hung up the receiver, went up in the lift and pushed the slip under the door of Professor Haguenin's room as he had been in the habit of doing several times a day for the past fortnight. Professor Haguenin was out, but the moment he returned he repeated to the French Prime Minister the message brought by the lift-boy : Germany had decided to sign the Peace Treaty.

The signature was duly carried out on June 28, 1919, in the Mirror Hall at Versailles, on behalf of the German Reich by the new Foreign Minister, Hermann Müller, and the new Minister of Justice, Dr. Bell—two lonely men in frock coats among countless uniforms and diplomatists' costumes glittering with gold lace. When night fell, Paris went mad amid a sea of pyrotechnics. Guns boomed from the roof of the Invalides. American soldiers, crazy with joy, wearing women's hats on their helmets in their excitement, ran wild along the Boulevards arm in arm with their triumphant French comrades. Every town in Germany hoisted mourning flags at half-mast.

The political leaders and delegates of the various countries said farewell to the joys of Paris. The President of the United States left France without delay. The

instrument of peace which he had been the first to sign was not countersigned by the Senate. The President resolved to address the American people direct, to explain his ideas, to explain himself, to defend himself. He journeyed from town to town, restlessly delivering speech after speech. He spoke from pulpits, from platforms, from his special train, appealing everywhere, North and South, to the mass of the people.

His entourage and his private doctor grew more and more concerned, more and more alarmed to observe a sudden, ominous change taking place in their harassed chief, who had once dreamed of this tour as a triumphant progress. The President was breaking up. His gaunt body began to hang loose, fleshless, like a skeleton. Often now his words came strangely laboured, from a stammering tongue. He spoke of his ideals, of the divine spark of international reconciliation—that spark which it was his sole achievement to have brought into the world—but his speech was dull and uninspired, and his audiences merely laughed. His " eternal values " were alien to American thought. His excuses for the attitude he had adopted, his apologia for the self-betrayal which he persisted in denying, failed to convince. Whenever he grew excited, the convulsive twitching which had been noticeable in his face from time to time in Paris came again, and would not leave him. At last he collapsed. He went back to his study in the White House at Washington, from which he had sallied out barely a year before as a new saviour of the world—completely broken up, hopelessly ill, surrounded by an atmosphere of secret dread, which his household did not dare to penetrate : a man marked down.

Woodrow Wilson died on February 3, 1924. He had lain for some time helpless after a stroke. He died of a palsy.

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